

# HAMAS'S TERROR, ARAFAT'S TERROR

THE

# NEW REPUBLIC

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**CONSERVATISM AFTER SEPTEMBER 11**  
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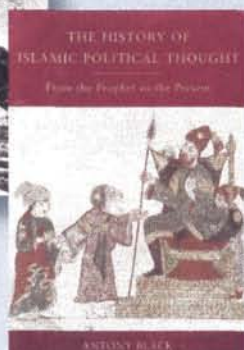
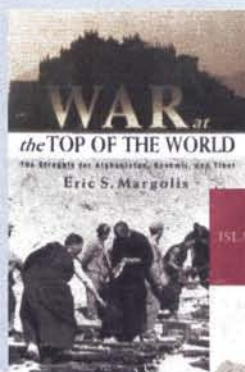
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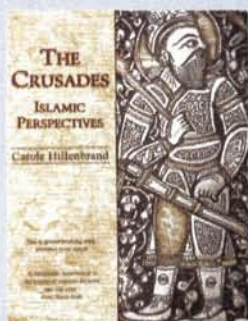
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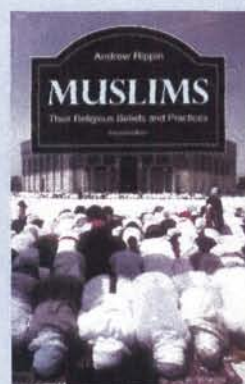
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## Central intelligentsia

TO THE EDITORS:

In his deft analysis of the CIA's culture of mediocrity, Peter Beinart offers several reasons why the national intelligence community does not attract and maintain the brightest, most competent Americans ("Teach In," November 12). To his list should be added the archaic ban on known gays and lesbians in uniform, under which three to four competent soldiers are discharged each day. Although nonmilitary agencies officially ended their discrimination under former President Bill Clinton, a significant portion of the intelligence community consists of uniformed personnel, who are subject to discharge under "Don't ask, don't tell."

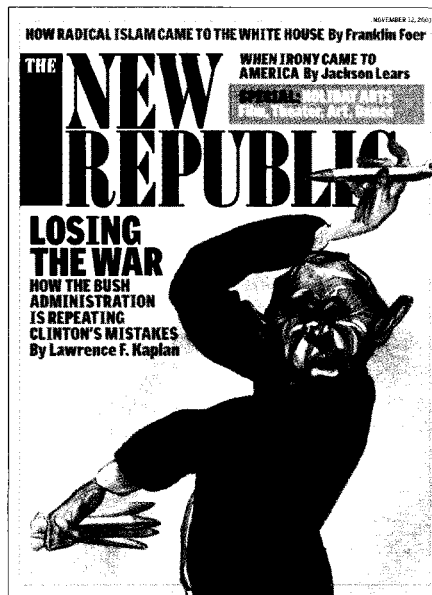
Last spring, for instance, an Army counterintelligence agent with extensive training as a linguist and ten years of experience in the armed forces was discharged when he told his commander he was gay. The late scholar Randy Shilts interviewed several Arabic linguists who were fired just before the Gulf war because of their sexual orientation, leaving the government "begging them to come back to work during the war." Our military and intelligence efforts are in dire need of brainpower and public support. The Pentagon could earn more of both if it ended its ban on gays who want to serve their country.

NATHANIEL FRANK  
*Director of Communications  
Center for the Study of Sexual  
Minorities in the Military  
University of California, Santa Barbara  
Santa Barbara, California*

TO THE EDITORS:

Peter Beinart offers no evidence that unthinking ideology explains the hesitation many academics might have about working for the CIA. I suspect such hesitation comes from a legitimate difference of opinion regarding how easily certain moral principles can be overpowered by reasons of state. Surely there is a need for the CIA. But just as surely, there are many examples of morally suspect CIA actions.

There is nothing unreasonable in reluctance over lending expertise to unknown or controversial policies; nor is such hesitation merely "hostility to the instruments of American power." Were Einstein and Oppenheimer disloyal lefties for expressing regret over how the products of their intellect were put to use? It is easy to understand their concerns, despite the "grave threat to [our] safety and liberty."



There is room for reasonable disagreement over how "America's universities [can best] serve their country." Summarily dismissing one view shows that even thoughtful moderates can lapse into their own brand of unthinking ideology.

MICHAEL A. NEBLO  
*Ann Arbor, Michigan*

## Global warning

TO THE EDITORS:

Brink Lindsey points out several Muslim countries he would count as globalization successes ("Poor Choice," November 12). Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey came into the 1990s looking for massive globally charged growth. Turkey and Indonesia left the '90s as economic slugs. Malaysia saved itself from the worst damage by bailing out of the currency-conversion system. In non-Muslim Asia, the only bright spot, China, has an unconvertible currency.

The global economic system will succeed only as long as the international currency system is stable. In the late '90s, because of an overzealous anti-inflation stance by the U.S. Federal Reserve, the dollar appreciated significantly against foreign currencies. Those countries most tied to the dollar, like Thailand and Indonesia, were the worst hurt by this appreciation. It doesn't matter whether the Muslim countries recognize this phenomenon or not. What matters is that joining the global economy is a risky and dangerous proposition. For Lindsey to make a convincing case that Muslim countries should join the global economy, he ought to first prove that they will not be whiplashed by misguided policy at the U.S. Fed.

ERIC MAURO  
*Brighton, Massachusetts*

## Read all over

TO THE EDITORS:

I was extremely intrigued by Glyn Maxwell's compelling vision of poems as white words on black paper ("Things Done on Earth," November 12). So much so that I was all the more disappointed when, a bit later, he reduced this idea to an argument in favor of formal verse and a dismissal of free verse. The notion that free verse is not capable of lighting the darkness around us, or registering its silence and terror, is simply ridiculous. Equally ridiculous is the sweeping argument that formal verse is somehow "better" than free verse—or vice-versa. Anyone knows that either can be done well or badly. Maxwell goes on to indict "most American verse" as "badly paid prose," as if there were no bad poetry being written in his native Britain. Everyone has his tastes, but I am suspicious of critics and poets who make their personal tastes the basis for pronouncements about what poetry should or shouldn't be, closing the door on whole populations of poets without properly evaluating their work.

JEFFREY HARRISON  
*Dover, Massachusetts*

GLYN MAXWELL REPLIES:

I don't dismiss free verse: I was drawing attention to its tendency toward self-absorption and slackness. That doesn't mean a good poet has no use for it. As it happens, I do think that formal verse is somehow better (as opposed to "better") and my article explains why I think that. But a good poem in free verse is better than a bad one in form, and this magazine receives plenty of both. I referred to American verse because I am writing for an American publication and was considering Gjertrud Schnackenberg's work against the background of American literature. I too am "suspicious of critics and poets who make their personal tastes the basis for pronouncements about what poetry should or shouldn't be," which makes me suspicious of all critics and poets, including Jeffrey Harrison and myself. ■

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## Where We Stand

*A commentary on public education and other critical issues*

# A Better Way

By **SANDRA FELDMAN**, President  
American Federation of Teachers

A few months ago, I joined with others to accompany President Bush on a visit to Thomas S. Wootton High School in Rockville, Maryland, one of the nation's best. It has well-prepared, certified teachers; a challenging curriculum; a safe disciplined environment; and a well-equipped library, complete with up-to-date technology. But visiting a school like Wootton—in an affluent community that has the means to invest in its schools—raises an important question: How can we replicate this kind of excellence in communities that don't have the same resources?

Research has shown us what works: smaller class sizes, extended day programs, ongoing support for teachers, good leadership, parent and community involvement. These help make great schools and can turn around low-performing ones.

But some school officials and politicians have turned instead to unproven, quick-fix schemes, including privatization. As much as some may wish for an easy answer, simply turning over troubled public schools to private, for-profit companies is not a cure. Indeed, the best we can say for privatization is that its results have been mixed. A close look reveals that private takeovers can't improve achievement unless they adopt proven public school reforms.

### Overcoming Years of Neglect

Across the country, communities that have faced years of adversity and underfunding are turning their schools around without privatization. Consider Hartford, Connecticut, which experienced firsthand the downside of privatization and the upside of doing what works. For years, Hartford was the lowest performing school district in the state. In 1994, the state took control of the schools and awarded a five-year contract to a privately owned corporation to manage the entire district.

By early 1996, however, state officials pulled the plug on that company because of its questionable financial practices, poor management of the schools, and low morale among teachers. At least as problematic as those failings, the attempt to privatize created tremendous conflict among stakeholders in Hartford, and it took several years for the community to come together again in support of the schools.

A productive working partnership was forged between a new school superintendent and the leaders of the Hartford Federation of Teachers. Working together for the first time in years, this labor-management coalition created a districtwide focus on literacy and brought research-proven practices into the classroom. After just a year, student achievement scores rose more than they had in the previous four years.



*Paying private companies to run public schools is not the answer.*

Hartford is not the only city to give up on privatization and improve student achievement the old-fashioned way—through proven reforms. Baltimore also tried privatization in the 1990s and found no resulting improvement in student performance. The school district cut short the privatization contract, and brought a research-based reading program into all city schools. The city also provided for the professional development of staff and the remediation needs of students. The resulting gain in achievement was described by a Johns Hopkins University researcher as “the kind that professional educators hope to see once in a lifetime.”

Unfortunately, the examples of Hartford, Baltimore, and other cities haven't stopped privatization advocates from trying to sell their miracle tonic. In Philadelphia, a proposal by the state to privatize the administration of the public schools has been withdrawn by the Governor in the face of widespread community opposition. There are still the issues of a State takeover without giving the citizens of Philadelphia a voice or vote, and of turning over sixty or more low-performing schools to Edison and other for-profit companies. Pennsylvania should avoid the setbacks widespread privatization caused elsewhere and instead provide resources wisely targeted to proven reforms.

### Uniting Communities Behind Schools

Privatization and takeovers without a local partnership and buy-in haven't worked. Poor school districts starved for resources for years can't be turned around without additional spending.

No one denies that Philadelphia schools need improvement. One significant factor is that the state has underfunded them for years. If it really wants to ensure that student achievement improves in Philadelphia, it should pay for what works.

Leadership is needed to bring the teacher's union and management together, get parents and business leaders involved, bring in proven programs, reduce class sizes, raise academic standards, and provide help for students struggling to meet those standards.

That approach is neither as radical nor as risky as privatization, and it might not fit as well into some politician's campaign literature, but real school reform, supported by adequate resources and proven programs, works. That's what our children deserve—in Philadelphia and in every city in America. ■

**Where We Stand** is published once every month in *The New Republic*. © Sandra Feldman 2001. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001. To see previous columns and access other resources, visit our web site at <http://www.aft.org>.

# TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

## Duty Free

ON JULY 11, exactly three months before the World Trade Center fell, David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union, wrote a column in *The Hill* newspaper entitled, "Privacy: An Emerging Front-Burner Issue." In it, he made an argument that today rings rather strange. He accused the Clinton administration of being so obsessed with the threat of terrorism and crime that it had trampled civil liberties. "Then Vice-President Gore even headed a commission," he explained indignantly, "that urged that when someone deemed suspicious tries to purchase an airline ticket, the government should have the immediate right to look into their banking and other records without a warrant."

In this liberal abuse, Keene saw conservative opportunity. House Majority Leader Dick Armey, he noted with approval, "is trying to get conservatives to put privacy at the top of their agenda." Keene foresaw an ideological battle that could shape American politics for years to come. "We are not so far down the road to trading freedom for security," he wrote in conclusion, "that the trend cannot be stopped or even reversed."

I'm not quoting Keene to make him look stupid. Quite the contrary. One of the fascinating things about September 11 is that it transformed the debate about security versus liberty at a moment when that debate was already in flux. As Keene's column suggests, some conservatives—outraged by the Clinton administration's abuses of civil liberties, and intrigued by the political opportunities they created—were preparing to try to claim the civil libertarian mantle for the GOP. And thank goodness. For it's largely because people like Keene were writing columns like that in the weeks and months before September 11 that there's any hope of stopping George W. Bush and John Ashcroft from committing far, far greater abuses today.

Keene's willingness to declare "freedom" more important than "security" can be seen as the culmination of a decade-long shift within the conservative movement. When Ronald Reagan was president, American conservatism consisted of basically four

imperatives: oppose communism, enforce law and order, restore traditional morality, and limit government. Only the fourth lent itself to a concern for civil liberties. The first three, by contrast, offered varying rationales for trampling them. To fight communism, the United States needed a secretive, centralized national security state. To enforce law and order, the police needed to be freed from the ACLU-imposed shackles that in the 1960s and 1970s had allowed criminals to run wild. Finally, restoring morality also meant curbing the excessive liberties of the '60s—in particular, sexual liberties like abortion, premarital sex, and gay rights that shattered traditional norms of right and wrong.

But in the 1990s, as we all know, communism disappeared, and crime dropped sharply. And so two barriers to conservative civil libertarianism grew dramatically weaker. (The third, moral traditionalism, remained and garnered more attention. But that attention only highlighted its unpopularity outside the conservative base, and by the late '90s, Republican politicians like George W. Bush were de-emphasizing abortion and gay rights in favor of vague, noncoercive calls for "responsibility.")

Libertarianism's growing hold over the conservative movement was most evident in the economic sphere, as the Gingrichites who took Congress in 1994 challenged the federal income tax and welfare state far more dramatically than the Reaganites ever had. But conservatives began to question whether Washington's police and military powers—powers no longer justified by the cold war and rising crime—might violate personal freedom as well. Those fears were dramatically stoked by the FBI's bloody raids at Waco and Ruby Ridge—raids that punished lawlessness not among urban blacks, but among the devout rural whites with whom American conservatives feel greater kinship. The press caricatured the right's civil libertarianism as "black helicopter" extremism. But concerns about unrestrained law enforcement made their way to into the Republican mainstream. Last year candidate George W. Bush denounced the use of secret evidence in immigration proceedings. And when Bush nominated John Ashcroft to be attorney general, the one consolation some liberals found was Ashcroft's strong record on privacy. As senator from Missouri, for instance, Ashcroft had proposed legislation stopping the government from preventing people from encrypting their e-mail. Overall, the left was still more concerned about abuses by law enforcement than was the right (if only because so much of that abuse was visited on blacks). But the gulf was far narrower than it had been in Reagan's time.

And for that, we should all be very grateful. Because since September 11, George W. Bush and John Ashcroft (who quickly forgot his record in the Senate) have proposed stunning infringements of basic American liberties. An administration that vowed to oppose racial profiling is interrogating thousands of Arab-Americans solely because they are of a certain gender, age, country of origin, and came to this country at a certain time. Thousands of others have been detained indefinitely—their names kept secret—mostly for minor immigration offenses that have nothing to do with terrorism. The administration claims that its proposed military tribunals will be fair because military courts already fairly try American soldiers—willfully ignoring the fact that those courts contain safeguards that the proposed tribunals almost certainly will not.

Liberals have been screaming about this for weeks now, and they should keep on screaming. But they don't matter to this administration. The people who do are on the right. *The Washington Times* has come out against Bush's military tribunals, and the Cato Institute plans to file a brief arguing that they are unconstitutional. Keene's American Conservative Union lobbied to include sunset clauses in certain provisions of the now-passed USA Patriot Act so extraordinary governmental powers will not automatically continue if we return to ordinary times. Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum, Paul Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation, and the National Rifle Association also insisted that the original legislation didn't adequately protect individual rights. The influential conservative strategist Grover Norquist told *The Boston Globe*, "We don't like bad guys, either, but let's not sacrifice our freedoms because the FBI and CIA want more power." William Safire has accused the president of "seizing dictatorial power" and establishing "kangaroo courts."

So far, most of the conservative grumbling has come from journalists and lobbyists—GOP politicians are still too awed by Bush's stratospheric approval ratings to object. But this battle will continue long after W.'s numbers come back down to earth. The respect for due process that has been born in conservative Washington since the cold war's end may yet overcome this administration's self-righteous disregard of it. And if it does, people like me—who loathe libertarianism's influence in so many areas of public policy—will have to admit that when it comes to reigning in a reckless Republican attorney general and an ignorant Republican president, a little libertarianism is just what this country needs.

PETER BEINART



# The Last Time, Again

**I**T IS RIGHTLY said these days that Americans have acquired, by a sudden and savage experience of terror, an understanding of the gruesome dimensions of Israeli existence. This is true, and no doubt it accounts for the Bush administration's acquiescence in the full measure of Israel's

fury at last weekend's bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa. But an important difference remains. The American experience of terror is shocking, but the Israeli experience of terror is formulaic. The Palestinian attack on Israel; the pride of some Palestinians about the attack and the apathy of other Palestinians (the ruling Palestinians) about the attack; the Israeli retaliation; the international condemnation of the Israeli retaliation; the American insistence upon the resumption of the hallowed "peace process"; the return of the Palestinian community to a condition of incitement, and of the Israeli community to a condition of dread: the script is crushingly familiar.

What Israel announced to the world last week is that it is done with the script, that there is nothing banal about the murder of its citizens. And at least this week, at least in the United States, the Israeli insistence that Yasir Arafat must put an end to Palestinian terror seems inarguable. But we have been here before, and it is unlikely that the Department of State will suddenly shut down the peace process that it has just attempted to revive. It is more than unlikely that Yasir Arafat will see the light. For he is a proven stranger to the light; a moral dwarf and a historical midget; a man of tactics and not strategies, of phrases and not principles; a man who confuses his own survival with the survival of his people, and prefers the establishment of a security service to the establishment of a state; a man who lives more in fear of his friends than in fear of his enemies; a leader who does nothing but follow; a leader who aspires only to the prestige of a victim; the smallest leader of a movement of national liberation in the history of movements of national liberation.

There is the view, of course, that Arafat is preferable to what will come after him. This view would be plausible if Arafat were not already doing the work of those who will

come after him. He has not accepted any diplomatic solution that will not fulfill the entirety of Palestinian aspirations on all of the west bank of the Jordan River, and he has not stopped or restrained Palestinian terror. In what significant way, then, is he different from Hamas? Indeed, the courting of Arafat by the international community, the endless diplomatic reiteration of the notion of his historical indispensability, serves only to conceal the truth about the political culture of the Palestinians, which is that it has undergone a momentous and profoundly disturbing transformation in the last decade.

What has happened is this: the theocrats are now ascendant. They were emboldened

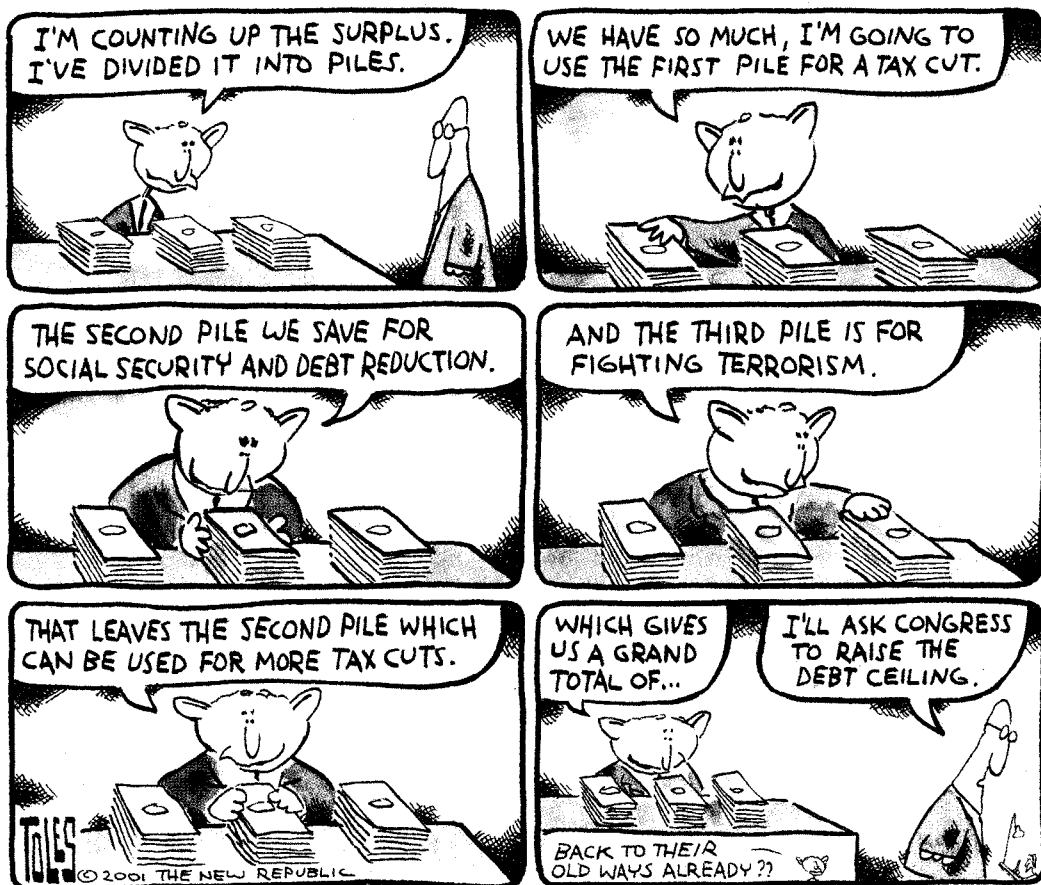
by Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, which they interpreted as Hezbollah's defeat of Israel in Lebanon. The "second intifada" of the past year must be understood not only as a popular war against Israel, but also as an internecine struggle within the Palestinian community, as an attempt by Hamas and Islamic Jihad to steal power and authority from the Palestinian Authority, which has chosen to give the mullahs and the martyrs the shovels—the freedom of action and the aura of legitimacy—with which to bury them. The leadership of the Palestinian polity is now divided between principled medievals and corrupt moderns. Jihadists and apologists, fevered people blowing themselves (and others) up and avaricious people puffing themselves up: *this* is the Palestine over which Arafat has presided.

If it is true, as Colin Powell remarked last weekend, that the recent atrocities were "not only ... a terrible attack against innocent Israelis, a terrible act of terror, but ... also an attack against [Arafat], it was an attack against his authority, it was an attack against the Palestinian leadership," then it is also true that Arafat was complicit, now as before, in the attack against him. Israel may be forgiven if it elects to respond to its mortal enemies in a different spirit. Does this mean that Israel's new "war on terrorism" indicates an abandonment of the peace process? It depends what you mean by the peace process. If General Zinni represents an attempt to continue the phony discourse of the recent past, to perpetuate the illusion that Yasir Arafat is a figure of magnitude who will make the grand compromise that will be necessary to create a state of Palestine that will live gladly in peace alongside the state of Israel, then General Zinni does not deserve the support of any Israeli interested in peace, and his mission is not really a peace mission. Blessed are the peacemakers, not the peacefakers. ■

**BAIT AND SWITCH I:** If the proverbial man from Mars touched down in Washington to witness the current debate over the stimulus bill, he might think that President Bush is demanding, above all else, a package of generous unemployment benefits for laid-off workers. This is the part of the stimulus that White House spinners have decided is most popular, and therefore the one with which they most want the president associated. So this Tuesday, the president visited Operation Paycheck in Orlando, a center that offers federally subsidized income support and job training. A handy White House press release the same day emphasized that Bush is demanding Congress pass a stimulus to “directly help workers who have lost their jobs.” By now, of course, one can assume that when the White House spends significant energy associating Bush with a popular liberal idea like unemployment benefits, its real proposal is conservative and unpopular. And those who have followed the stimulus debate closely know that this administration’s *sine qua non* is actually the acceleration of the marginal tax rate reductions passed earlier this year. Tuesday offered a clarifying glimpse of this split between White House spin and White House policy. While Bush talked unemployment in Florida, the head of his council of economic advisers, Glenn Hubbard, gave *The Washington Times* a more straightforward indication of the president’s priorities, noting that the president would veto any stimulus package without the tax cuts. And the unemployed? The paper notes, “Mr. Bush has offered an olive branch to Democrats, agreeing to accept additional expansion of unemployment benefits and health care payments. But Mr. Hubbard made it clear yesterday that the bulk of the package had to have the president’s tax-cut incentives.”

**BAIT AND SWITCH II:** In late November, Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Tommy Thompson unveiled a pilot program under which the federal government would rate nursing homes on various quality measures, and then make the information available to the public on the Internet. So far, so good. But even as

the administration begins putting quality-of-care information on the Web, it seems set on undermining the quality of that information by dismantling the regulations that govern nursing home safety. First came word, in a front-page *New York Times* article in September, that HHS might cut back on federal inspections for the nursing homes that have demonstrated better quality records in the past. Given the rapid turnover in nursing home staff and the constantly changing corporate landscape in the health care industry, that’s simply begging for trouble. Apparently stung by the press coverage, the White House quickly renounced the proposal. But now, three months later, they’re contemplating another regulatory rollback. Currently, government inspectors who find abuses in nursing homes can rate them as “isolated,” “a pattern,” or “widespread,” depending on their prevalence. Under new proposed guidelines, however, they will be barred from giving the “widespread” rating unless they can document specific harm to more than 75 percent of residents. But inspectors almost never *speak* with three-quarters of a home’s residents, because it would be a ludicrously time-consuming task; instead, inspectors meet with representative samples and extrapolate. Making the “widespread” rating so difficult to obtain will inevitably mean that nursing homes that deserve it will slip past, and thus will have less incentive to curb their abuses. In a letter to HHS protesting the proposal, Senator Charles Grassley and Congressman Henry Waxman cited as one example a Texas



nursing home in which an inspector interviewed 16 residents. The inspector determined that the nursing home had improperly physically restrained all 16 without demonstrating medical necessity, and that several of those interviewed were “declining in their activities of daily living, i.e., ambulatory abilities, hygiene, eating, transferring.” Accordingly the inspector cited the nursing home for “widespread” problems—something the new rules would prohibit, since he didn’t actually interview three-quarters of the home’s 75 residents. HHS insists it is merely clarifying existing ambiguities in the inspection system, and adds that the proposed rules are just that—proposed. Hopefully the administration will ultimately backpedal from this awful idea, too. If not, at least people will still have that nifty new Internet rating system.

**LOTT LESS:** Remember Trent Lott? Since his demotion to Senate Minority Leader following Jim Jeffords’s May party-switch, Lott has all but vanished from the political radar screen. And this week his GOP colleagues are probably wishing he had stayed vanished. Frustrated that Democrats were refusing to hold votes this year on a six-month cloning ban and a Republican energy bill that includes ANWR drilling, Lott decided on December 3 to force the issues himself. And so he bundled both bills into an unwieldy amendment that he then tried to attach to a Democratic railroad-worker bill. But Lott’s scheme to

embarrass the Dems backfired when his own troops abandoned him en masse. “We ended up picking ourselves off,” said unimpressed GOP conference chair Rick Santorum. Minutes after Lott personally implored his colleagues to follow his lead, his gambit failed by 94 to 1. Even Lott wound up voting against it. For months there have been rumblings of a leadership challenge within the Senate GOP caucus. Don’t be surprised if that soon becomes a roar.

**DEPARTMENT OF POTS AND KETTLES:** “There’s nothing fixable overnight. This is the product of years of idiocy.”—former State Department counterterrorism official Larry Johnson, on the lack of CIA personnel devoted to busting terrorists, *Dallas Morning News*, November 24

“What the evidence shows is that bin Laden has an international network of contacts, but that it’s more analogous to the Elvis Presley Fan Club than a corporation like General Motors.”—Johnson, quoted dismissing the threat posed by Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda in “It’s HARDLY TERROR INC.,” *U.S. News & World Report*, June 11

**IDIOCY WATCH, CONT’D:** “This is all wonderful news. It is time to finish off the U.S. once and for all. I was happy and could not believe what was happening. All the crimes the U.S. has committed in the world. This just shows, what goes around comes around, even to the U.S.

I applaud the act. The U.S. and Israel have been slaughtering the Palestinians for years. Now it is coming back at the U.S.”—former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, in a phone interview with Radio Bombo in Baguio City, Philippines, September 11

**DEPARTMENT OF UNDERSTATEMENT:** “There are many, many qualifications to be an ambassador, and I suppose knowing the language could be one of them.”—State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, on the news that America’s ambassador to France, Howard Leach, doesn’t speak French, November 21 ■



# On the Hill Mean Time

By MICHAEL CROWLEY

**W**HEN GOP LEADERS chose California Congressman Bill Thomas to chair the immensely powerful House Ways and Means Committee in January, they knew the risks. Thomas is one of the smartest members of Congress; he is also one of the nastiest. Last year he finished second in the "Meanest" and "Hottest Temper" categories in *Washingtonian* magazine's "Best and Worst of Congress" poll. (Tom DeLay was voted "Meanest," thanks to Democratic hostility, but *Washingtonian* said Thomas polled equally from both parties.) *The Washington Post* noted that Thomas's penchant "for berating allies and enemies alike" worried his fellow Republicans, as did episodes like a wild 1995 shouting match between Thomas and a colleague in a public hallway that culminated in the other congressman grabbing Thomas by the necktie.

In fact, in order to get the chairmanship, Thomas had to assure his colleagues that he'd change his ornery ways. "I realize that to be chairman of the committee I can't be the Bill Thomas you're used to seeing on the committee," he promised. In the months before his selection, Republicans say, the stocky 60-year-old assiduously projected an image that was "calm and cool."

No longer. In the past few weeks Thomas has jeopardized

the effort to win "fast-track" trade authority by alienating key House Democrats. And in the grueling fight with the Senate over an economic stimulus plan, he has insulted the very Democrats with whom he needs to cut a deal. "Bill Thomas has turned the stimulus talks into a personality-management exercise," says an exasperated Senate Democratic aide. In other words, just when he needs to stay under control, Thomas has reverted to belligerent form. And by the time this year's legislative session is over, the really angry people may be in the White House and in the Republican leadership, where precious legislative accomplishments could be stymied by one difficult man.

True to form, Thomas became Ways and Means chairman after a fight. Illinois Congressman Phil Crane had ten years more seniority and the support of influential social conservatives. He also exploited Thomas's coarse reputation, declaring in a public letter that he had never screamed at a colleague. And some Republicans worried about reports that Thomas was allegedly having an affair with a health-industry lobbyist who worked closely with his subcommittee. But Crane was undermined by a bout with alcoholism that landed him in rehab last year, and by the fact that Thomas had raised more money for the party.

Most important, though, was Thomas's fabled policy expertise, especially on major White House initiatives—Medicare and Social Security reform and tax cuts—that the committee would handle. Thomas established a rare mastery of Medicare as a subcommittee chairman in the 1990s, rising before dawn to study hospital reimbursements and part-B premiums. His grasp of tax policy is also legendary. As a result, Thomas knows he's usually the most knowledgeable person in the room. And he lets it show. "He is supremely, absolutely confident in his own beliefs. He believes that he

gets it better than anyone else," says a senior House Democratic aide. Said Thomas himself this year in an interview with *The New York Times*, "People don't like it when I'm upset because somebody decided that they just thought about this for 10 seconds and they want to take two hours to dissect it."

Thomas passed his first test as chairman this March when he quickly rammed Bush's tax cut through his committee on a party-line vote. But while ramming may suit Thomas's blunt, impatient personality, it's a style poorly suited to the current political environment. Today the GOP no longer controls the Senate, and bare-knuckled politics seems especially coarse after September 11. Whip-cracking is out; deal-making is in.



# Getting Standards Right

**Paul T. Hill is a research professor at the Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K-12 Education.**

**C**EOs and governors are celebrating because most states have adopted standards-based reform and built testing programs to assess school performance. But their apparent victory is hollow. K-12 standards, which business leaders hoped would establish what every child needs to know to become a self-supporting and informed citizen, have come to mean something quite different.

Most state standards have no empirical basis. **Standards have been developed as airy visions that satisfy all factions of the professional education community.** Enthusiasts for different subjects—American versus world literature, various arts, and so forth—have all found secure places for themselves.

This shift in the meaning of standards is evident in states such as Washington that endorse standards but cannot agree on how schools will be held accountable. Business leaders are discovering that the groups that developed state standards were never asked whether they could prepare most or all students to meet the standards. People who developed standards in this way are understandably skeptical about taking firm action toward failing schools or districts. Maybe the aspirations were too ambitious and should be amended or their application delayed for a generation or so. Maybe teachers need a lot more training and experience. Maybe public spending on schools should double or triple.

Business people, who think standards should be explicit about what every child must know at a certain age if he or she is to become a participant in economic life, take a harder line. By their logic, temporizing is

irresponsible. If children in a school are not meeting standards, something must be done immediately. There is no time to wait until teachers and administrators "come around." Under this logic, standards are promises made by the state and the state has an obligation to provide schools that can teach students successfully.

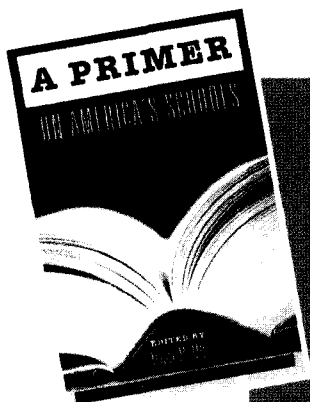
**Business leaders need to stop congratulating themselves and start insisting that standards be built correctly.** In many states, they will have to start over.

Evidence-based literacy and mathematics standards, particularly at ages nine and thirteen, could be created, but they would be more modest in scope than the airy visions endorsed by most states. It is hard to see how any state could prove that children's futures would be blighted if they did not know specific facts about history, arts, or even science at a particular age. But compared to the aspirational standards that most states have now set, those that are evidence-based would be compelling warrants for sustained and dramatic state action toward school improvement.

In the history of American public education, the standards movement might be seen as yet another loosely defined effort to stir up commitment and exhort teachers to higher performance. Or it might be seen as a turning point after which states—rather than political processes and customs—set goals for student learning. Much depends on whether business leaders and governors stop congratulating themselves and begin to look more closely at the treaties among educators that now pass as standards in most states.

— Paul T. Hill

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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The first sign that Thomas might have trouble adjusting to this new reality came last month. Ways and Means Republicans ruefully tell of a Thomas explosion over an insurance bill written by the House Financial Services Committee that gave insurers tax breaks for catastrophic reserve funds. Florida Republican Mark Foley, a longtime advocate of the measure, sent a benign e-mail to fellow Ways and Means Republicans on its behalf. Soon after, Thomas called a meeting of committee Republicans at which "he went ballistic," according to GOP aides. Thomas felt that the Financial Services Committee had encroached on his authority and that his own committee members may somehow have been plotting to undermine him. According to one attendee, a shouting Thomas even warned that he might ask House leaders to remove insubordinate members from the committee. "And if that sounds like a threat," Thomas concluded, "it is."

Much more worrying, from the White House's perspective, have been Thomas's clumsy efforts to craft a bill granting the president "fast-track" trade authority. Several observers from both parties say Thomas has imperiled the measure by working almost exclusively with a narrow group of centrist Democrats and refusing to stroke the ego of his committee's veteran ranking Democrat, Charlie Rangel. Even when he brokered an agreement on a House bill with the centrists in October, Thomas didn't want to discuss it with Rangel. According to House Democratic aides, Thomas found Rangel and his friend, Louisiana Democrat William Jefferson, chatting on the House floor. Thomas approached and asked Jefferson in a stage voice whether the agreement was acceptable to "the gentleman from New York," i.e., Rangel. "It was totally bizarre, weird behavior," says one aide. Relations between Rangel and Thomas got so bad, according to *Roll Call*, that last month House Speaker Dennis Hastert engineered an effort to bring them together—to which Thomas responded with typical hostility.

Should fast track fail, Thomas will likely take a good share of the blame. Some House members believe that including Rangel—who generally complained less about the authority itself than about the way it was being pushed through Congress—earlier in the negotiations could have won his support. That in turn might have given several other Democrats cover to follow suit. At the least, it might have prevented Rangel from rounding up support for an alternative bill he wound up crafting on his own.

**B**UT THOMAS'S "BIZARRE, weird behavior" has peaked in the stimulus battle. Within 48 hours of the September 11 attacks, Thomas was talking about a capital gains tax cut—galling Democrats who accused him of trying to exploit the tragedy. By October his committee had produced a stimulus plan so loaded with corporate tax breaks that it was widely trashed, even in conservative venues like *The Wall Street Journal*. Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill also dismissed the bill, which cost \$25 billion more than the administration had requested, as "show business." Now, with the Republican-controlled House having passed its version, Thomas is the lead GOP negotiator in the long, public stand-

off with Senate Democrats. But Thomas's harsh tone has proved disastrously ill-suited to the public relations jousting that will decide the bill's outcome. Last month Thomas accused the Democrats of "race-baiting" in a fight with no racial dimension. He also virtually impugned Daschle's patriotism, saying he was either "nakedly in opposition to economic recovery and assisting us in the war effort," or that his political ambition was so rampant he should step down as leader. In an October 31 press release, Thomas derisively compared Daschle to "a third grader taking a math test ... [who] can't wait for recess." And in a manic and bellicose performance before the press last week, Thomas effectively called Daschle empty-headed, commenting that it would be easier to know what was going on inside Richard Gephardt's head "because you'd bump into things up there." Not that Gephardt escaped Thomas's wrath. Thomas called him a whiner "who can't stand not being at the center of attention."

**T**HOMAS HAS REPORTEDLY been just as thorny in private. He threw all staffers out of a stimulus meeting between House and Senate leaders in Daschle's Capitol conference room last Wednesday. He also threatened to leave if reporters were allowed a photo op, which he apparently suspected would be some kind of setup. ("I am not going to be used!" Thomas declared, bewildering other attendees.) At the same meeting, Thomas shouted at Daschle, accusing him of trying to sabotage the package. When Democrats tried to discuss policy, Thomas stalled, insisting that talks be guided by a detailed, written framework. Among other things, Thomas demanded an agreement that "no dissenting views or additional views shall accompany the joint explanatory analysis" released with any stimulus bill. Several Democrats say Thomas has been the single biggest impediment to a stimulus deal. "He's the Grinch who stole the stimulus," says one.

Some observers speculate that Thomas is obsessed with controlling the negotiations because he fears that Daschle, a proven tactician, will outmaneuver him and his fellow House Republican leaders. "They're afraid they're going to sit down in the room and get snookered," says a Senate Republican aide. Another Republican suggests that Thomas is merely venting the immense frustration felt by House Republicans. Burned by their defeat on the airline security bill, House GOPers believe Senate Republicans may now cave on the stimulus as well, and that the White House may sell them out once again. Whatever the case, one Republican official familiar with the White House's thinking says the Bush team is less than thrilled with Thomas's caustic rhetoric.

In a sense, the White House is getting what it asked for. Last spring, having a dictatorial, details-obsessed Ways and Means chairman was just what the administration needed to pass its tax cut. But with the tax cut passed, and Thomas crusades like Medicare and Social Security reform shelved for now, those tactics no longer work. If Republicans hope to prevail in this very different legislative season, they need a softer touch. What they have instead is Bill Thomas. ■

# Jerusalem Dispatch

## Normalcy

By YOSSEI KLEIN HALEVI

**T**ERRORISM IS THE ultimate anti-Zionist weapon. It subverts Israel's promise of normalcy for the Jews. One reason Israelis have learned to live with the recurring image of parents burying their soldier sons is that the death of young people in uniform isn't a violation of what humanity considers normal. But the murder of teenagers on a crowded downtown street on a Saturday night is an unbearable reminder of the absurdity of normalizing the Jews on a strip of land sacred to three competing faiths and located in the world's most volatile region.

The saleswoman at my local video store told me that the father of one of the boys killed downtown had been in just the day before. "He was worried about his son who's serving in Gaza. And then the fourteen-year-old gets killed on a street corner in Jerusalem." On Jerusalem's Ben Yehuda Street, the dead were mostly Sephardi teenagers; on the Haifa bus, mostly elderly Russians. The victims included an old man whose proudest achievement was having brought his extended family from Russia to Israel, and a young woman who'd gotten a lung transplant and celebrated every day as a gift.

Our lives now depend on random decisions. At ten o'clock on that Saturday night, about an hour before the bombings, my teenage daughter announced she was going downtown, to a café off Ben Yehuda Street. It's too late, I insisted; if you'd asked an hour earlier, I would have agreed. The café she wanted to visit was across the street from where one of the suicide bombers detonated himself.

The bombings followed about two months of what passes in Israel for quiet (shootings, stabbings, mortar attacks, and attempted bombings every day but no successful mass killings). Intensive military action during that period seemed to have put the terrorists on the run. Days before the atrocities, Prime Minister Sharon reassured the nation that a turning point had been reached in our war against terrorism and that he would now turn his attention to the economic crisis. Desperate for a return to normalcy, we seized the respite and returned to the cafés and malls—which is why the terrorists could kill and maim so many teenagers on a Saturday night in Jerusalem.

During that interlude, we indulged in the distractions of a nation that doesn't feel mortally threatened. Labor strikes, which had been largely abandoned during the intifada, shut down the universities and the airport. The feuding between secular and ultra-Orthodox, suppressed by unspoken mutual agreement since the outbreak of the intifada more than a year ago, resurfaced with its fanatical passion intact. When the ultra-Orthodox chairman of the Knesset's Finance Committee refused to approve allocations for civil defense

because of a delay in government funding for yeshivas, a Labor MK denounced the ultra-Orthodox as "parasites." He, in turn, was denounced as Nazi-like. In an ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem neighborhood, a mob ransacked and later torched a photo shop allegedly selling pornographic movies. The secular owner shoved an old man who was instigating the riot; the old man later died of injuries sustained in his fall. He is now revered as a saint, ultra-Orthodoxy's first contemporary martyr in its war against the secular.

We even began tempting ourselves again with solutions to the Palestinian problem. Left-wing activists proclaimed September 11 an unprecedented opportunity for Middle East peace. Yasir Arafat, they said, finally understood that the world would no longer tolerate terrorism and that he must align with an emerging Pax Americana. (Of course, they'd said the same thing after the Gulf war.) Former Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami called for an internationally imposed solution, as if Israel could expect any fairer treatment from the international community than it received at the UN's anti-racism conference in Durban. Labor MK Haim Ramon insisted that the solution was immediate separation—even though unilateral withdrawal under terrorist pressure would only compound the disaster of Israel's flight from Lebanon, which emboldened the Palestinians to launch the intifada in the first place.

The longing for normalcy persisted even after gunmen fired into the central bus station and a nearby outdoor market in the Northern town of Afula last week. When the Israeli media downplayed the attack because the fatalities were relatively few, there was little public indignation. And even on the day of the Haifa bus bombing, Army Radio staged a revolt against the ritual of collective mourning—which calls for playing only sad Hebrew songs after a terrorist attack—and broadcast "normal" American rock songs, too.

**N**OW, HOWEVER, OUR respite is over. All workers' strikes have been suspended, and the images of the ultra-Orthodox on television are of ambulance drivers, not arsonists.

The most telling shift is a return to the realization that there is no solution to the conflict. The Israeli psyche naturally resists fatalism. The Zionist goal was to transform the Jews from recipients of history into its shapers. On the facade of Tel Aviv's twin Azreili Towers, the tallest buildings in the city, lights now form a bracing Zionist slogan, "IT'S IN OUR HANDS." Most Israelis agree with Sharon that Arafat has been given one last chance too many, and that we must hit back. Still, there is widespread acknowledgment that the right has no solutions either—that if the left can't bring peace, neither can the right bring security.

Among those few who still think there is a solution are Ariel Sharon and Shimon Peres. Even now, after the Israeli mainstream has repudiated Sharon's Greater Israel and Peres's New Middle East, the two old activists remain ideological optimists. Astonishingly, both still believe in the possibility of a stabilizing interim agreement: Sharon wants to replace Arafat with a new Palestinian leadership that would presumably be sobered by Israeli resolve, while Peres wants

to bribe Arafat into reason. For nine months Sharon and Peres have stalemated each other: Peres has tempered Sharon's response to terrorism, while Sharon has restrained Peres's eagerness for negotiations. Now their bizarre partnership depends on Peres enduring attacks on Arafat's compound, and on Sharon refraining from killing or exiling the Palestinian leader. For Peres, Israel's response has already gone too far; for Sharon, not nearly far enough.

And yet this ugly little war may turn out to be a sideshow. Israeli military intelligence warns that if the United States hits Iraq, Saddam will likely retaliate with a chemical attack on Israeli cities. We can't bear to contemplate that new threat to the normalization of the Jews. We keep our gas-mask kits secreted in our closets; we ignore the postcards from the civil defense authority to "refresh" the kits—the absurdly upbeat Hebrew euphemism for the periodic updating of gas-mask filters and the injections contained within the cardboard boxes. Fear of exploding buses defers an even more terrifying memory of utter helplessness, when we sat in sealed rooms, wondering what the falling missiles contained and whether the plastic sheets over the windows and wet towels under the door would keep the poison gas from seeping through. ■

## Look who's heading the SEC.

# Invested Interest

By JONATHAN CHAIT

**H**ARVEY PITT IS not a household name. Until recently, the only people who regularly came across him were those in scrapes with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). For such individuals, however, Pitt was the man to see. He was considered the sharpest securities lawyer in the country, and while not everybody could afford his fees, those who could were generally pleased with the results. When the SEC charged Ivan Boesky with insider trading, he hired Pitt, who engineered a lighter-than-expected sentence. Over the decades, Pitt built an impressive roster of similarly well-heeled clients who stood accused by the SEC of securities fraud, misstating their finances, other pecuniary offenses. And he has put his persuasive talents to work not just for individuals but for large economic interests who do business with the SEC—on whose behalf he has prowled the corridors of Washington as a super-lobbyist. Most of the time, Pitt fought the SEC to a draw, or better.

But in August, Pitt entered a new line of work. The bad news for those having difficulties with the SEC is that they can no longer hire Pitt to defend their interests. The good news—and, taking all things into account, it vastly outweighs the bad—is that Pitt is now chairman of the SEC.

Pitt, in other words, heads the agency charged with rooting out financial crime—which is roughly the equivalent of making Johnnie Cochran head of the FBI.

To the uninitiated, it might seem strange that a Republican president would make an appointment so likely to weaken the SEC. Yes, the SEC is a government agency, which obviously militates against it from a conservative point of view. But the Commission mainly defends investors. The immediate victims of financial crimes tend to be individual stockholders. (Witness the unfortunate souls who invested in Enron.) Insider trading and fraudulent financial reporting are generally ways for those with access to privileged information to make money at the expense of those without it.

Nor are investors the only beneficiaries of an aggressive SEC. Economists across the political spectrum recognize that the market functions best when all participants have access to information. If potential stockholders fear that a firm may be padding its financial reports, they will demand a higher return—a "risk premium"—for their investment. When corporations have to offer higher returns to their investors, it costs them more money to raise capital. That makes businesses less profitable and the economy less productive. The SEC's role is to give investors confidence that they aren't going to get duped, and thereby reduce the risk premium.

So if the SEC helps investors, corporations, and the economy as a whole, why doesn't everybody love it? Because while strict regulation produces broadly shared benefits, it burdens those most directly connected with the financial industry, who have to comply with all of the SEC's rules. The various professional groups associated with Wall Street have organized to win themselves the most lenient possible treatment. Thus the appointment of Harvey Pitt.

**P**ITT'S PREDECESSOR AS chairman, Arthur Levitt, came to the SEC from Wall Street, but he used his nearly eight-year chairmanship to advance an aggressive reform agenda. Indeed, the financial press recognized Levitt's activism as a driving force in the boom market of the 1990s. Levitt's reforms, noted *The Economist*, "benefited Wall Street, for all its hostility to Mr. Levitt's every move, by increasing public confidence in the markets." Upon his retirement, *BusinessWeek* editorialized, "We won't see the likes of Arthur Levitt Jr. anytime soon."

Alas, Levitt didn't win every battle. Last year he waged a losing effort to reform corporate audits. The first line of defense against cooked books isn't—and shouldn't be—the SEC. Instead, corporations hire accounting firms to inspect their balance sheets and offer prospective investors their seal of approval. The trouble with this arrangement is that accounting firms also perform lucrative consulting work for the same companies they audit—in fact, auditing represents only around one-quarter of accounting firms' business with their clients. Obviously, this gives auditors a strong incentive to go easy. Imagine if high school teachers made most of their income selling private tutoring lessons to their students. Could they grade those students fairly in school? Of

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course not. (Indeed, this very system is receiving a lion's share of the blame for Enron's staggering collapse. Arthur Andersen examined Enron's books while taking in \$27 million in fees for other services from the energy behemoth. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it didn't object to Enron's shady finances.)

So Levitt proposed, sensibly enough, banning accounting firms from doing other business with the same corporations they audit. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) fought back with a fierce lobbying campaign that eviscerated Levitt's ban. The accountants' campaign was spearheaded, of course, by Harvey Pitt.

The fact that Pitt has spent his career thwarting the SEC does not, by itself, preclude the possibility that he could make a dramatic turnaround as chairman. But even his very short tenure to date does not inspire confidence. He set the tone a few months after taking office, in a speech to the accountants' lobby, his former client. In a barely disguised repudiation of his predecessor, Pitt announced that the SEC would no longer act "in a demeaning, demanding, or demonizing way." By contrast, the AICPA, in Pitt's telling, "has always evidenced its deep commitment to protecting the public interest." In an interview with *The Washington Post*, Pitt called for a "kinder, gentler" agency.

And he seems well on his way to making it so. Pitt has already replaced the top staff of the agency's critical corporate-finance division—an unusual move at the SEC, where the previous two chairmen left the staffs they inherited in place—and installed people who, like him, have a background representing the industries the SEC regulates. In October the Commission instituted an amnesty policy, whereby firms accused of violations could turn themselves in and receive little or no punishment. "I think that there have been instances where what the agency has done is focus more on an after-the-fact casting of blame and aspersion than in figuring out how to protect investors," he told the *Post*. "We aren't going to play gotcha." Imagine if other law enforcement agencies took this view.

**A**MONG SEC AFICIONADOS, the usual term for Pitt's ideological bent is "pro-business." But that's a misnomer—being "pro-business" at the SEC does not mean looking out for the business community as a whole. It means, rather, catering to the particular businesses that directly lobby the SEC. Their interests do not necessarily coincide with those of business generally. And they run directly counter to the interests of investors.

What makes this strange is that investors are the very group Republicans claim to represent. In recent years they have devised an entire demographic theory that you might call "The Rise of the Investor Class." Its thesis is that stock ownership has risen to the point where it now encompasses a majority of the population. This "investor class" majority supposedly has a distinct and coherent set of economic interests—as owners of capital, they identify with the rich and reject income redistribution. The White House has made references to the idea, and conservatives speak of it in almost Marxian terms, as a heroic class destined to sweep liberalism into the dustbin of history.

The investor class, as conceived by its GOP champions, is overblown. Mainly, it is an excuse for Republican politicians to claim that the interests of their K Street benefactors mirror the interests of most Americans. In truth, capital ownership remains wildly unequal—the secretary who stashes a bit of her pension in the stock market has little in common financially or politically with Bill Gates. When it comes to financial regulation, however, there really *is* an investor class, and it *does* have a coherent interest—namely, strict regulation ensuring that the information available to stockholders is accurate. Unfortunately, the K Street lobbyists who represent the financial sector have a diametrically opposed interest. The choice of an SEC chair, therefore, offers an almost perfectly designed scientific experiment to determine where the GOP's true loyalty lies. The result? Goodbye, investor class. Hello, Harvey Pitt. ■

## Kabul Dispatch Prep School

By ELIZABETH RUBIN

1. "The Mujahedin laid 260 anti-tank mines for Russian tanks. Out of that 180 mines exploded. Now find out how many mines are remaining."

2. "15 Mujahedin attacked 100 Communists from one side. 17 Mujahedin attacked from the other side. Out of 100 Communists, 14 were arrested and 72 were killed. Find out: a) how many Mujahedin were involved in the attack and b) how many infidels fled."

3. "Karim is a Mujahed. He had 5 magazines of AK bullets. Each magazine has 30 bullets. He fired 3 at the infidels and killed 50 infidels. Find: a) the average number of bullets used to kill an infidel and b) the number of remaining bullets."

**I**F YOU PICK up a standard schoolbook in Kabul, whether from the mujahedin government of Burhanuddin Rabbani, or from the subsequent Taliban regime, these are the standard math problems you'll find. Instead of using apples or oranges to teach counting, the books use drawings of 1 Kalashnikov, 2 box cutters, 3 swords, 4 tank mines, 5 hand grenades. A box of 2 booby-trap mines multiplied by another of 4 booby-trap mines equals a drawing of a crowded box of 8 booby-trap mines. Learning the alphabet is equally jihadic. The letter *r* stands for *tofang*, or gun, in a book of basic Dari language. "Jowad brought a gun for a Mujahed," is the sample sentence. It also stands for *Talib*, as in, "Abulatif is a good Talib." Or there's the letter *sh*, for *shamsher*, sword: "Shakir waged jihad with a sword." Or the letter for *A*, with a soft sign over it, as in Israeli: "Israelis are enemies of Muslims." And *zh* for *zhola*, hail: "The Mujahedin are launching rockets like hail on the infidels."

ELIZABETH RUBIN is covering the war in Afghanistan for THE NEW REPUBLIC.

For a country at war for the last two decades, these may have been useful lessons, matters of everyday practice. But they're also an indication of how deep Afghanistan's psychological wounds run. "The international community knows Afghanistan by only three things: Al Qaeda, mujahedin, and the Taliban. And three people: Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar, and Ahmed Shah Massoud," a young Afghan man named Faisal, who works in his uncle's bookshop in Kabul, told me one night. He had hired a tutor for his sister's home education, but when he discovered the books her tutor was using, he postponed her lessons. Of course, he added, Massoud was a great Afghan hero. But, "I wish people would know there are real people living here with minds to think," and that they'd know what poetry and scholarship Afghanistan had brought into the world. Like the Persian Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rum Balkhi, from Balkh in the North; or Avicenna, the philosopher and physician known as the "Prince of Physicians," whose *Canon of Medicine* was a classic in Europe until the seventeenth century—and whom James Joyce cited as a source for *Ulysses*, particularly because he was vilified by Islamicists for his scientific heresies; or Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, an astrologer and scholar who discussed the Earth's rotation on its axis and the speed of light relative to the speed of sound in the eleventh century.

Faisal is not alone in his musings. "How do you recover from 12,000 intellectuals executed by the Communists in 1979," asked Shah Mohammed, an Afghan publisher and the owner of two of Kabul's best-known bookshops, "and six million Afghans [who] live abroad?" His stores are stacked with old manuscripts and selections from his collection of more than 8,000 titles of books on Afghanistan—the largest in the world. And he publishes many of his books in three quality papers: a cheap one so Afghans can afford them; an expensive one on imported paper; and a mid-priced, lightweight one for journalists and travelers.

SHAH HAS SUFFERED under every regime. Under the Communists, he watched as one bookstore after another shut down. "We'd had a relaxed life here, and this was our first experience of torture, so Afghans left one by one." Already an obsessive about books, he decided, against his mother's wishes, to leave his family's construction business and open a bookstore. "I made a lot of money," he said. Soon, however, the pro-Moscow minister of culture discovered a book of Mao's selected works in Persian and books about jihad in his store. They accused him of harboring imperialist literature and connections, and imprisoned him for a year. "But for me it was an enjoyable year. I read all the old, classic Persian texts. I was surrounded by people of all ideologies and we read and joked together for a year," he says. During the Rabbani years, when a thousand rockets rained down on the city, he constantly had to shut the shop. And you can see the result of Taliban rule in the blacked-out or missing covers on many of his books. "They banned my books. They arrested me. They arrested and tortured my brother. They raised the price of rent and taxes. But I said no, you can kill me, still I will keep open the shops for the university. And sometimes I bribed them."

SHAH IS ONE of the not-so-silent majority of Kabulis who insist that foreign powers must impose both peace and a negotiated settlement here, and that the return of King Zahir Shah will facilitate that process. But there's also a strong faction here who have lived out the equations and sentences in those schoolbooks. They are not only opposed to the return of the king, but also to anyone imposed on them, particularly by the United States. One of them is Sayed Zia, a Northern Alliance commander and the nephew of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. Sayyaf, a Pashtun Islamic scholar and leader of one of the more radical Islamist movements, was embroiled in the factional fighting in Kabul that leveled much of the city in the early 1990s. Today he belongs to the rigid, older, graybeard faction of the Northern Alliance that supports Rabbani. During the years of jihad against the Russians, Sayyaf was funded by Saudi Arabia to promote Wahhabism, and helped recruit and house hundreds of Arab fighters in the 1980s. As a result, his nephew, Sayed Zia, spent many of his formative fighting years with some of the most infamous terrorists, including Osama bin Laden.

On a cold morning a few days ago, he welcomed some of us into his old base, which he and 16 other mujahedin re-occupied in the early hours of November 13, when the Northern Alliance entered Kabul. The old, blue-domed white building sits in a grove of pine trees on a slope behind the Inter-continental Hotel. It's largely destroyed, and Sayed Zia, a thin green-eyed man with a small beard and a bit of a lisp when he speaks English, said they're having problems with supplies. "Yesterday we had only potatoes to eat here," he said, wrapping himself in a heavy wool shawl. The morning he entered Kabul he ran into some of his old jihad friends. "We were down the street from the hotel and they fired a rocket at us," Sayed Zia recalled. His men killed one of the Arabs and captured the rest. "Two of them knew me from jihad and they said, 'We are fighting the USA and now you are capturing us?' But I didn't respond."

Sayed Zia's silence may have reflected his ambivalence toward the United States. In the days of jihad, life was simple. And so, he said, was Osama bin Laden. "He was so simple he didn't have the courage to stand in front of people and speak. He was modest and kind and polite. . . . [H]e was one of our best friends. I slept with him for months." They shared a military base in Jaji, in Paktiya province near the Pakistani border, in the years before bin Laden took over the leadership of the Arab contingent. Sayed Zia recounted several instances in which bin Laden was encircled and under heavy bombardment by Russian forces for days on end: "I never saw such fearsome fighters," he said of the Arabs. "They would jump into the fighting five meters from the Russians while the Afghans all stayed behind." Sayed Zia grew wistful. He recalled what a skillful horseman Osama was, how he could jump on a running horse with no saddle. He recalled Osama's favorite weapon, a Kalakov, like a Kalashnikov but with smaller bullets, which Osama had picked off a Russian soldier he killed. "He was our best friend and at last he was killing us," he said. "If I saw him today I'd kill him because he killed our leader Massoud. But I don't want to kill just any Arab; they're simple ordinary

people who've been told that infidels are in Afghanistan and you should go fight them."

In fact, it's true. Several Arab prisoners I've spoken to feel they were lured here under false pretenses, believing not only that they'd fight American soldiers but that the Afghans wanted them here. Sayed Zia laughed unabashedly as he told us about the array of Arab terrorists he counted among his close friends in the past, including Khalid, who with his brother and two nephews has been accused of blowing up the U.S. embassies in Africa. "I met him three years ago in Pakistan. He was nervous and shaving off his beard. He'd come from Dubai and had a British passport, posing as an Afghan refugee. I was trying to convince him not to be with the Taliban because they're selling our country. But he said they were the only ones who could impose *sharia* on all of Afghanistan and that we couldn't. And he said they needed to establish a party, a government, and a base in Afghanistan to fight the Americans and British."

We'd come to Sayed Zia hoping he could draw a portrait of Osama bin Laden from those early years. But what emerged after several hours of conversation was his anger

at the United States for creating bin Laden and for now, again, trying to impose its will on Afghanistan. For now the voices of the young moderates in the Northern Alliance—which include Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Interior Minister Yunus Qanooni, and Defense Minister General Muhammad Fahim—are winning in Bonn. But the discontent of men like Sayed Zia, and especially his uncle, the powerful radical party leader Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, will prove dangerous.

"The Americans created bin Laden and the Taliban to destroy us," he said, speaking about the early years of the Taliban. "But instead God intervened and Osama killed 6,000 Americans. . . . Now the USA wants to bring King Zahir Shah. But what's he doing here? He's an expired man like you read on your medicine. It's our right to make a government for ourselves. We fought for twenty-three years. We've had two million Afghan victims martyred and now the people bought by the Americans are coming here. The USA wants to kill us with expired medicine but we will go back to the mountains. We know how to fight the USA. The Taliban were foolish and didn't know how." ■

## In defense of a bloated military.

# Force of Habit

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

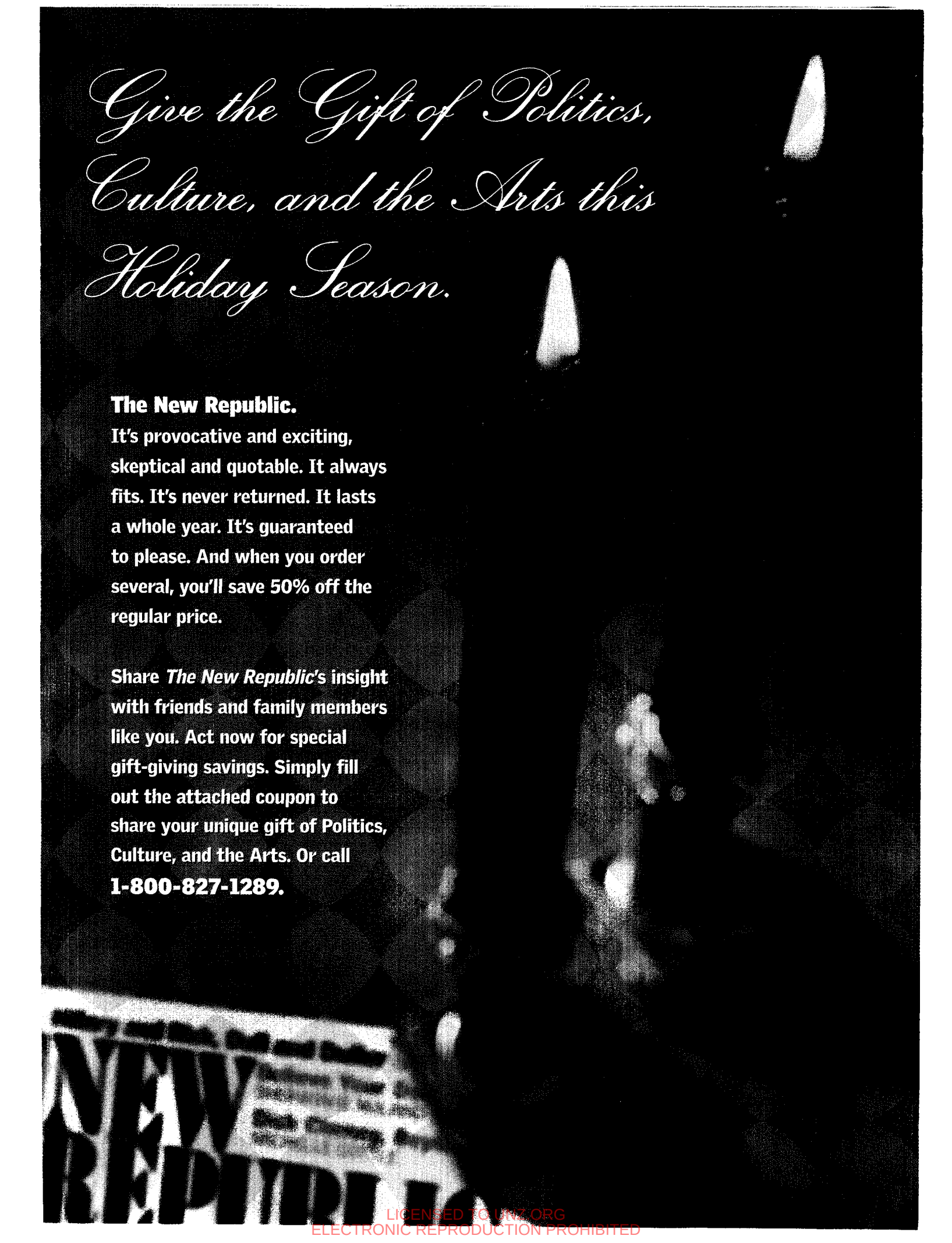
**E**VER SINCE THE Berlin Wall fell, editorialists, politicians, and policy analysts have been pronouncing the United States military bloated, overpriced, mired in antiquated cold war assumptions, and unready for a "small wars" world. The exact critique varies according to its source—reformers on the left tend to focus on getting rid of large, expensive weapons systems as a way to reduce costs; those on the right see cutting overall troop numbers and deployments as part of a "transformational" commitment to high-tech weapons. But commentators across the spectrum agree that the military must abandon its fixation with heavy armor, big tactical aircraft, and other cold war relics in an effort to get lighter, faster, smaller, and more flexible. During the 1990s no fewer than six blue-ribbon commissions recommended sweeping changes in armed forces structure, operational concepts, and weapons types. By the time George W. Bush took office, support for a capital-letters "Revolution in Military Affairs" (RMA) was so widespread—with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld an especially strong advocate—that it looked like a military "transformation" might actually happen.

Thank goodness it didn't. Because a funny thing has happened since September 11: The bloated, top-heavy, overpriced, cold war military has done fantastically well in Afghanistan—a mission no military planner could have

plausibly envisioned just three months ago. Nor was this an isolated success. The expensive, heavy, hardware-oriented U.S. military has proven unstoppable in the Gulf, in Bosnia, in Kosovo, and now in Afghanistan. Indeed, since the end of the cold war, the military has failed only in Somalia—the one place it followed the smaller-faster-lighter dictum. In Somalia, small, flexible groups of soldiers went in with only light weapons and no air cover or armor; the results were American deaths and a policy fiasco.

The lesson is not, of course, that the military should not be reformed. Interservice rivalry and overlap are ongoing problems; the dynamics of the military-industrial complex often make weapons-procurement too expensive; many domestic bases remain open because of political influence rather than need; there are problems aplenty. The lesson, rather, is that since it is impossible to predict the military challenges the nation will face in the future, we need a lot of powerful military hardware and a lot of personnel. One reason the United States military consistently excels is that its expensive, out-sized character means it has plenty of whatever turns out to be required. And so when the unexpected happens, as it has over the past three months, the Pentagon is ready.

Consider one of the most criticized features of the post-cold-war military: its "tooth-to-tail" ratio. The Pentagon famously has eleven support personnel for every one person who goes into combat; fully two-thirds of the defense budget



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is for staff, operations, and maintenance, not weapons. Pretty bloated, huh? Except that the military's long, expensive tail is what enables it to position large contingents of people and equipment anywhere on short notice—an essential component of victory at a time when we may need to deploy force quickly to unanticipated (and often unanticipatable) parts of the globe.

As retired admiral Bill Owens pointed out in his book *Lifting the Fog of War*, during the six-month buildup to the Gulf war, the United States moved more tonnage of supplies—including 1.8 million tons of cargo, 126,000 vehicles, and 350,000 tons of ordnance—over a greater distance than during the two-year buildup to the Normandy invasion. One reason Iraq's large army was routed in just 100 hours, with few U.S. casualties, was that American forces had all the supplies they needed, where they needed them. The history of warfare is replete with armies done in by the logistics of maintaining supply lines far shorter than those the United States military runs on a routine basis—it was supply problems, for example, that ultimately undid Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union. Since World War II, only once has any nation other than the United States even attempted combat in a place not contiguous to its borders—Britain, in the Falklands. The United States, in the same period, has fought more than three dozen “actions” all across the globe, while maintaining the defense of North America, Western Europe, South Korea, and Japan. Big, cumbersome, expensive logistics are what have made this possible.

In Afghanistan, the American military has performed nothing short of a logistical marvel: taking one month to launch an air war and less than three months to insert ground forces, on the opposite side of the world, in a place where no previous preparations had been made, and where the United States lacked bases in nations adjacent to the foe. Naval aircraft have been in the air substantially longer, and generated many more “sorties” than the Navy trained for, yet neither planes nor pilots have broken down. Since the early hours of the air war, the United States has even operated a fleet of tanker aircraft circling in Afghanistan's airspace, enabling Navy fighters to refuel on their way in toward targets, then again before heading back to their carriers in the Gulf or the Indian Ocean. This is just one example of how the lumbering military has adjusted to the unexpected Afghan campaign with almost blinding speed.

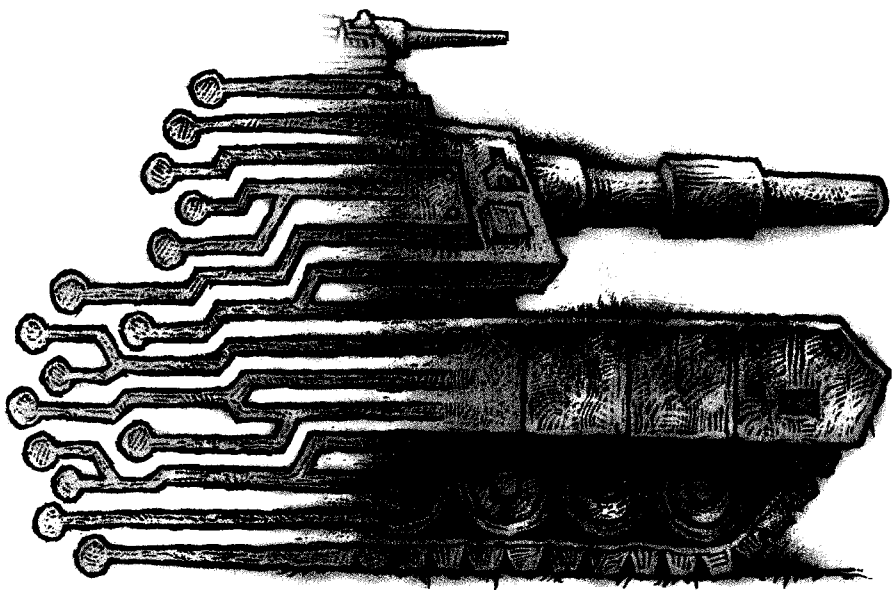
Speaking of those carriers, a standard complaint of the smaller-lighter military crowd is that America's fleet—of twelve supercarrier groups, a force originally intended to attack the Soviet Union from the northern seas—has become a white elephant in a world where America is the only superpower. Really? The availability of three carrier groups has been essential to the current air war in Afghanistan. Usually there is also a carrier battle group in the

Pacific near Japan, and another “on station” near the Persian Gulf, in case something bad happens there. Given that, at any moment, most battle groups are not at sea (they rotate for repairs and crew leave), apparent excess is required for on-call strength. There are legitimate arguments about whether future naval battle groups should be based around smaller ships less vulnerable than carriers to counterattack. But the supercarriers are what enable the military simultaneously to project overwhelming force in one part of the world, while controlling the seas everywhere else.

A related complaint holds that America's standing army, at ten active divisions and almost 500,000 total soldiers, is needlessly large. But having such a large standing force is what allows the United States to respond rapidly to regional problems without shirking other commitments, such as maintaining 100,000 military personnel in Europe and another 100,000 in East Asia. Huge as the military is, reservists have had to be called up to support the Afghan campaign. Maybe the United States should leave Western Europe on its own, or should not intervene in places such as Kosovo, in which case standing forces could be reduced. But these are arguments about foreign rather than military policy. If we are to remain the bulwark of NATO and active against evil governments worldwide, then the end of the cold war does not obviate the need for a large United States military.

In addition to complaining about the military's overall size, critics argue that the costly, heavy weapons designed during the cold war—60-ton Abrams tanks, Mach 2 fighters, city-sized ships—are not appropriate to the post-cold-war era. But as we've seen in the Gulf war, Kosovo, and now Afghanistan, the American hardware that was designed to counter a superpower turns out to be the cat's meow against secondary foes. Heavy weapons won't work everywhere; most bridges leading into Kosovo could not support the weight of an Abrams tank, for example. But the fact that all technology has limitations hardly means we should abandon our best stuff in favor of less formidable weapons.

Nor does it necessarily mean the United States should halt expensive arms projects originally designed with the



cold war in mind. Currently, for example, the Army wants a new self-propelled field gun—with the untimely name “Crusader”—to replace its 1960s-vintage tracked howitzer. Crusader is a heavy, ponderous hunk of machinery originally designed for use against the Warsaw Pact, and at \$11 billion, it’s costly. Pundits sneer that the Crusader is overkill and represents warfare’s past, not its light, flexible future. But big can be good. The Crusader (please, a new name) is significantly more accurate and fires much faster than any field piece the Army or Marines now possess. A single Crusader might have done in minutes as much damage to any Taliban front line as multiple strike-fighter sorties. If there had been one in the vicinity of the Taliban prison uprising last month, the fighting there would have been brief, as this new gun is so accurate it could have shelled Taliban areas of the complex without striking Alliance areas. The Crusader, in other words, is another weapon that will confer a huge advantage on U.S. forces. Why, for any reason other than affordability, shouldn’t the United States take it?

**O**F COURSE, AFFORDABILITY matters, and may count out some acquisitions. Right now, for example, the Air Force wants to buy the F-22, an advanced fighter originally designed to shoot down the best Soviet interceptors. By all accounts F-22 performance is superb, but the plane is so expensive—each single-seat F-22 costs more than an entire Boeing 747—that it has priced itself out of the market. This is especially true since another new tactical fighter, the F-35, costs one-third as much and would be almost as effective against enemy planes. In this case, giving up on a cold war vintage concept makes sense for economic reasons.

Similarly, the Pentagon is down to fewer than 200 bombers (versus about 35,000 at the peak of World War II), with much of the force consisting of 40-year-old B-52s currently projected to remain in service until the year 2037. To expand the conventional bombing fleet—which seems wise, given the number of times the U.S. military was called on to bomb in the last decade alone—some want to invest many billions for a few more max-tech B-2 stealth bombers. But what the United States really needs is a new B-52, a fairly conventional plane that carries heavy payloads. Something like a bomber version of the Boeing 767 or 777 might be relatively low-cost, available quickly, and just the ticket for dispensing smart bombs and missiles against enemies with limited air defenses.

Yet for every cold war idea like the F-22 or B-2 that is now hard to justify financially, there are others that still make sense if the United States is to maintain its huge battlefield advantage. In addition to the Crusader, there is the proposed Zumwalt-class warship, a strange-looking vessel whose low, pillbox profile suggests the Civil War’s ironclad *Monitor* after genetic engineering. Expensive, complicated Zumwalt destroyers, originally designed to sink an enemy navy, would be the first stealth ships—hard to locate with conventional detection systems, and thus able to sail right up to an opponent and launch missiles and shell targets at close range. (Currently the U.S. Navy prefers to stay in “the blue water,” far from counterattack.) Though chances are no Zumwalt-

class ship will ever engage a superpower vessel, once these advanced boats are in the fleet they are sure to have innovative uses in unpredictable future conflicts.

And that’s where many current military critiques make a key mistake: They assume that expensive weapons intended for one mission will not prove adaptable to another. For example, all current U.S. tactical fighters—the F-14, F-15, F-16, and F-18—were designed primarily for shooting down other aircraft. That mission has become less pressing since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it, the main challenge to U.S. air supremacy. So the four planes have taken on the role of tactical bombers. During the Kosovo campaign, they bombed from above 15,000 feet to avoid ground fire; bombs from that altitude sometimes missed, causing civilian deaths and military inefficiency. Some said this showed that cold war relic planes were unsuited to modern semi-wars. But in the two years since Kosovo, engineers have perfected the JDAM, a smart bomb guided by signals from a global positioning satellite network. The JDAM is accurate when falling from high altitude and is relatively cheap, owing to declining prices for chip-based electronics. During Kosovo, JDAMS were exotic items dropped only in small numbers from B-2 bombers. Now almost every U.S. warplane—including most of the aforementioned fighters—has been adapted to carry the JDAM, and this munition has become the bomb of choice for the Afghan campaign. More than 4,000 JDAMS have been dropped so far, with only a few striking the wrong targets. Sadly, one was a miss that killed three Americans. Afghanistan marks the first time any air force has achieved high-altitude tactical bombing accuracy. Suddenly, America’s costly, cold war focused, tactical air arm looks custom-made for just the conflict we’re now engaged in.

**N**OW CONSIDER WHAT an Afghan operation would be like if the “Revolution in Military Affairs” viewpoint had prevailed. Basically, RMA proponents want big reductions in the standing army, aircraft carrier groups, and conventional air wings, with the savings used to purchase more long-range smart bombs and missiles. If the United States possessed an RMA-style military, what it would presumably do in Afghanistan is lob advanced smart bombs and cruise missiles, then wait for the other side to say uncle. But existing smart weapons have already struck at will in Afghanistan, and that has not been sufficient to destroy Al Qaeda and rid the entire country of the Taliban. Ground forces, now being introduced in greater numbers, must likely finish the job. And this is a case in which the opposition is lightly armed. In the Gulf war, the air campaign operated effectively for over a month; but it was not until the introduction of ground forces with heavy armor that Saddam Hussein’s forces were driven back toward Baghdad. Perhaps an RMA military, doing nothing more than destroying targets from great distances, could have prevailed in Kosovo, but this was likely the exception. (And even there, Milosevic’s capitulation may have been influenced by the threat of ground troops.) Regardless, it’s hard to believe that physically occupying territory will ever become irrelevant. And unless it does, putting people and

armor on the far side of the world will require an expensive military with lots of big, complicated stuff. There's just no escaping it.

None of which means the Pentagon wouldn't benefit from new thinking—it just needn't be “revolutionary.” The Army, for example, is taking its time converting one division to light operation. The goal is a division (with the Orwellian name “Objective Force”) that can deploy anywhere in the world in five days, with heavy armor to come later. The Pentagon has also dithered for more than a decade about fielding a medium tank easier to transport than the Abrams. As a result, U.S. units in Afghanistan may end up advancing without much in the way of armor to back them up.

Clear thinking about ways to keep the U.S. military big without runaway cost will be essential if there is to be enough

money to take on new anti-terrorism responsibilities while maintaining current global commitments and perhaps building missile defense. The week before September 11 Rumsfeld was drawing up paperwork for a fiscal 2003 budget request of perhaps \$348 billion—up about 15 percent in adjusted terms from the final Clinton defense budget—rising to perhaps \$400 billion by fiscal 2007. Such numbers will rival, in inflation-adjusted terms, the spending levels during the Reagan buildup—a period during which much useful equipment was acquired but billions were wasted on dubious projects. Keen management will be required if the Pentagon is to experience another big appropriations increase, yet avoid \$6,000 coffee-pot purchases. After all, that money can be much better spent keeping the armed forces large, complicated, overstaffed, heavy, and lumbering. ■

## What conservatives should learn from 9/11.

# Right Turn

By ANDREW SULLIVAN

THESE ARE HEADY times for conservatism. The last 20 years have seen a decisive shift in the West toward market economics and away from statist intervention. The welfare state as it has historically been understood is an endangered species. Culturally, the importance of family structure, religious faith, and personal responsibility is affirmed by a wider array of people than for a generation. And with September 11, the bedrock conservative insight that the world is an inherently dangerous place has been decisively proved once again. Even the democratic left has moved irrevocably right in the last generation, witness Blair and Clinton. As the United States achieves early, though still provisional, success in the war on terrorism, the temptation for conservative hubris is close to irresistible.

It should be resisted. Although this war's evident justness and remarkable success may well discredit the far left for a generation, the right, too, has deep problems that cannot much longer be ignored. Republican losses in recent elections, and a shake-up at the Republican National Committee, hint at larger conservative doldrums. The war has both highlighted and deepened intractable ideological tensions—and there is barely a faction or a school of thought on the right that hasn't been affected. This is not to say that the war presents a new crisis for the right. That would be an overstatement. But it is to suggest that this war should occasion as much thinking on the right as on the left—and that the time for it is now.

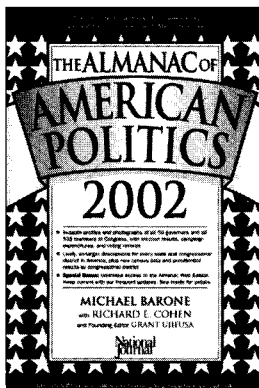
Most obviously, wars almost always move politics leftward. To fight wars, governments assume greater powers than are necessary in peacetime. Money is spent on the war itself and

on the domestic needs it exacerbates. The deficits that are now predicted for George W. Bush's first term are not solely a result of this—they stem primarily from the slowing economy, faster government spending over the last few years, and to a lesser extent, tax cuts—but the war has made these deficits deeper. Such deficits crowd out private investment and thus hinder wealth-creation—they are the enemy of the freer economy and society some conservatives have been trying to foster for two generations.

There is, to be sure, a silver lining in this for conservatives. The structural tax cut, enacted as the Bush administration's first priority, is the surest fire wall against a significant expansion of government in the near future. It's also true that just because government is gaining greater power in some areas—defense, emergency services, intelligence, law enforcement—doesn't mean that government, as contemporary liberals understand it, is poised for a comeback. Greater respect for the military doesn't translate automatically into support for, say, government-backed universal health care. In fact, conservatives might argue that our lack of preparedness for September 11 shows what happens when government ignores its most fundamental duties—defense of the country, protection of American citizens—and devotes itself instead to overweening obligations like, say, providing free prescription drugs for seniors or micromanaging the economy. Alas, no such case has been effectively made. Instead, we have a panicky, unnecessary stimulus package, which uses the war to throw money at pork-barrel projects and bail out ailing corporate behemoths. Compare the current package to Clinton's initial modest stimulus, mercifully junked in 1993, and you can see how far left domestic economic policy

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has moved. If Clinton was an Eisenhower Republican, Bush looks increasingly like a Nixon liberal in domestic economic policy. The Nixonian gambit of buying public support for the war by reckless, pro-corporate Keynesianism at home is a sobering precedent, and could wreck Republican credibility on the economy in the months and years ahead.

More drastically, the law enforcement measures designed to avert terrorism have thrown another virus into the conservative hard drive. From William Safire to Congressman Bob Barr, stiff conservative resistance to government actions that clearly impinge upon civil liberties is one of the first big domestic political surprises of the war. Libertarianism—often allied to neo-isolationist foreign policy—has gained traction in recent years, and the war has shown how deep instinctive suspicion of government has become. Barr recently told ABC News, “I’m not worried about tribunals, for example, overseas, but domestically we have to abide by the ... Bill of Rights.” A lockstep, Clinton-baiting right-winger, Barr has nevertheless wildly denounced a slew of modest and well-precedented measures to protect the country from further terrorist assault. Some circumspection is, of course, necessary. But Barr’s knee-jerk suspicion of all government authority has led him into a deeply strange alliance with the editors of *The Boston Globe*.

If you think this is a trivial spat, look at the combatants. If you’d been told before September 11 that one of the fall’s political fights would pit Bob Barr against John Ashcroft, you’d have dismissed it as a liberal fantasy. But the Barr-Ashcroft divide falls ominously along the conservative-libertarian fault line of contemporary Republican politics. Barr’s argument echoes other Republicans who harbor deep suspicions of the FBI and CIA, as well as the experts at the Cato Institute who worry about a new American imperialism if the war goes well. If the base of Republican support for the last decade or so has been what Grover Norquist has called the “leave-us-alone” coalition, then a far stronger military, intelligence, and homeland security apparatus, however good for the country, is not the greatest of news for the conservative coalition.

**L**IBERTARIANS AREN’T THE only ones who are discombobulated in the current war. Neoconservatives have been snacking on crow for a month or so. Immediately after September 11, they saw in the war on terrorism echoes of the Clinton administration’s weakness. They interpreted the reliance on airpower as an attempt to avoid direct U.S. military involvement overseas, and the construction of an international coalition as a sign of weakness. Key neocons, like William Kristol and Robert Kagan, already distrusted President Bush, and had been alienated from the administration ever since backing John McCain in the primaries. In October, Kristol wrote, “Hostile regimes tend not to succumb to air power alone—especially when the use of air power is itself constrained by diplomatic considerations, as it has been in Afghanistan.” Neoconservative distrust of Colin Powell has also led to panic. “When will President Bush step in and find himself a Grant to take over from the McClellans?” Kristol and Kagan fumed in the November 19 *Weekly Standard*. The

week before, *THE NEW REPUBLIC* ran a cover of a hapless Bush, titled “Losing The War.” Within days the Taliban collapsed. Kristol and Kagan gamely argued that it was their advocacy of a stronger military policy that helped change the administration’s course, but there is little evidence that the Bush team engineered a U-turn in military strategy in late October, and plenty of evidence that the military campaign was always designed to be effective, swift, and flexible. The difference between the neoconservatives outside the administration and the governing conservatives on the inside had rarely been so wide or so visible. Like the civil libertarians, some neocons simply lacked the maturity to be team players when it really counted—and their part of the Republican coalition is shakier as a result.

The split between the neoconservatives and the Bushies could widen further in the war’s next phase—if the White House takes things slow with Iraq, or in any way lowers the volume of its war rhetoric. The subtext of this internecine battle is, of course, the first Gulf war, where it is a matter of neocon faith that Colin Powell prevented the United States from toppling Saddam Hussein. Perhaps the best sign of the lingering bitterness came in an e-mail sent to Bill Keller by former President Bush, reported in Keller’s recent fawning profile of Powell in *The New York Times Magazine*. “Kristol said Powell opposed the use of force,” Bush wrote. “That is a vicious slander, totally untrue. I valued Colin’s opinion that when force was needed we’d use sufficient force to keep our casualties to a bare minimum. ... That Colin did not want to use force is a grossly unfair, insupportable lie.” This is clearly not a dispute that time has tempered. Both sides could be wrong, of course. Powell almost certainly made a catastrophic mistake in 1990; but that doesn’t mean he will do so again.

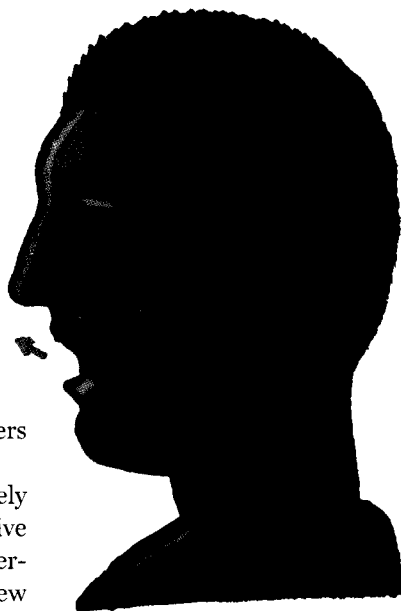
That ability to adjust with the times has never been a neocon strong suit. The neocons looked at China in the 1990s and saw barely any difference between it and the former Soviet Union at its megalomaniac peak. They tend to shout “Munich” at the slightest American accommodation to international exigencies—as in the standoff with China earlier this year over a downed American spy plane. And they look at the forty-third president and see the forty-first. But even the most casual observer must notice that the two men differ in their war leadership, executive style, and diplomacy. Bush I was a conciliator, a listener; he never mastered or enjoyed the executive functions of his job. While Bush I caved into left-liberal pressure and hiked taxes, Bush II has resisted such pressure, enacted credible tax relief, and appointed John Ashcroft—demonstrating his capacity to stick to goals through wobbles and travails. This latter quality—W.’s tenacity and political acumen—seems lost on the neocons. Their continuing churlishness—a function of ideological rigidity and personal pique—will only add to conservative weakness in the months ahead.

The neocons have also tied themselves in knots on the issue of unilateralism. During the 1980s and 1990s, it became a matter of neocon faith that any coordinated international military action was inherently suspect. Allies could do more harm than good; coalitions could too easily become ends not means. Indeed, although neocons paid lip service to the value of alliances, they were always more com-

fortable when the United States was going it alone. They often cited as persuasive proof of their argument the Clintonian tendency to ask allies what to do before acting, or to shunt off important national security measures to international coalitions or even the dreaded United Nations. And so throughout this war, the neocon chorus has loudly wailed every time an alliance is invoked. The neoconservative response to the Bush-Putin summit, the most important and hopeful Russian-American meeting in many years, was skeptical when it wasn't nonexistent. The administration's delicate balancing act with Pakistan and other Muslim powers was equally subjected to microworrying.

But in this respect, the war has surely revealed an essential flaw in neoconservative ideology. Like most ideologies, neoconservatism has a tendency to ossify, to fail to see new opportunities or realities. In the new war, neither unilateralism nor multilateralism is appropriate. The Bush White House has instead improvised an imaginative if precarious series of bilateral and trilateral alliances, each designed to solve a particular problem. There has been little evidence so far that these alliances have hindered our efforts to find and destroy terrorism. Quite the opposite. Placating Saudi Arabia hasn't stopped us from pummeling Al Qaeda. French and Italian military support hasn't paralyzed the bombing campaign. Russian intelligence has been indispensable. Yet the neocon paranoia continues. This is not to say that no criticism of Bush's prosecution of the war is ever warranted or that alliances shouldn't be subject to skepticism. But the reflexive, shrill nature of that criticism reveals how sclerotic contemporary neoconservatism has become.

But if the war has exposed libertarianism's and neoconservatism's internal flaws, they remain vibrant schools of thought compared to what has been termed "theoconservatism." With the ascension of a born-again president, the influence of these theocons seemed on the rise. A major initiative of "compassionate conservatism" was the co-optation of private religious groups for publicly funded social work. Suddenly influential thinkers like Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and Marvin Olasky argued that the United States needed more public religion, that the boundaries dividing church and state had been too drastically drawn in recent years, and that politics had little to fear and much to gain from a more self-consciously religious cast. Bush's personal contribution to this argument was an ecumenical one. He embraced the fusion of religion and politics, but insisted on making it a multifaith endeavor. So Christians were just one part of a more publicly religious America—with Jews and Muslims and any other bona fide faith participating as well.



It would be hard to think of a political philosophy that is less appropriate after September 11. The terrorist attacks emanated from a total fusion of religion and politics, and illustrated for many conservatives and liberals the *reductio ad absurdum* of a theocratic order. At first, the White House went into spin control, tapping the Islamic apologism of thecon David Forte to blunt the argument that religion had anything to do with Al Qaeda terrorism. Karl Rove insisted that some remnant of Bush's faith-based initiative would pass the Congress—although it now appears that whatever emerges will be severely diluted. Michael Novak wrote in *National Review* an essay dedicated to the notion that theoconservatism remained intact: "The present war is not a war between a secular nation and a Muslim nation," he insisted. "Ours is not a secular nation. We are the single-most

religious of all the advanced nations, and the third- or fourth-most religious of all nations anywhere on earth. Our Founding's religion, in case you want to know, is predominantly Christian and Jewish. And a good thing, too!"

The defensiveness behind Novak's words is not hard to discern. Indeed, for many theocons, fundamentalist Islam's critique of American society has been a little too close for comfort. Jerry Falwell's initial suggestion that American immorality brought this on ourselves was an expression of the Christian right's id. Or consider this, from Joseph Farah, the editor of *WorldNetDaily.com*, a popular conservative Web newspaper: "Exporting MTV would only serve to confirm Islam's worst fears and most accurate suspicions about the West—that we are a people who exploit women in crueler and more effective ways than the Taliban ever considered. We turn them into sex objects. What we do to young people in general is no better. While the Islamists program their young people into becoming suicide bombers, MTV programs our children into self-destructive, sexual time bombs."

This is an extreme view and it would be unfair to say that all theocons hold it. But the sentiment is real. Some radical theocons even averred in the past two months that the role of Islamic women under the Taliban was not an unmitigated evil. This dour religious conservatism was never a mainstream idea in the United States—and, although it helped galvanize the Republican base, it also helped prevent conservatism from becoming a majority public philosophy. But after September 11, theoconservatism is even more out of sync with most Americans, not to mention "leave-us-alone" conservatives of a more libertarian or politically secular bent. It is hard to fight a war against politico-religious extremism if you are winking at milder versions in your own political

coalition. So far the strains are mild. But what might once have been a useful sinecure for a tiny extremist part of the base is now political suicide. The result may be a temporary muting of this religious emphasis among leading conservatives, and even its eventual abandonment. In a war with terrorist theocracy, America's political secularism—allied with its civil religiosity—seems one of the Constitution's sterling achievements, and not one that many Americans would want unraveled any time soon. Many conservatives recognize this. The problem is that the theocrats within the movement are too embedded to be removed without enormous struggle.

**B**UT PERHAPS THE biggest conservative victim of the war has been cultural pessimism. Not long ago, leading paleoconservatives were denouncing America as a country, in Robert Bork's words, "slouching toward Gomorrah." Moral decline was almost irreparable; civil responsibility was a distant memory; pop culture was sapping any social fiber we had; and the evils of feminism, homosexuality, and Hollywood were corroding the country's ability to believe in itself or defend its shores. None of this was ever true—at least to the degree that some paleocons portrayed it. Anyone with passing acquaintance with the actual country knew that its moral collapse was greatly exaggerated. Support for President Clinton during his impeachment was less a sign of the country's descent into moral chaos than a pragmatic choice of the lesser of two evils. The unremitting pessimism of many on the right was a form of self-righteous narcissism. And it began to segue into an incipient, conservative anti-Americanism, an odoriferous philosophy that helped turn off many voters from the broader Republican message.

The response of the American people to the events of September 11 surely disproved these scolds once and for all. The heroism of rescue workers, the courage of the passengers on Flight 93, the phlegmatic public response to anthrax attacks, the overwhelming support for a difficult war, the resurgence of a simple, ennobling patriotism that has rarely degenerated into jingoism—all these are signs that the central social fiber of America was and is resilient and profoundly moral. In fact, the details of the American response devastated many of the stereotypes the paleocon right had constructed about America. Which of these cultural pessimists would have named David Letterman and Dan Rather as two of the most endearing emoters of patriotism in the wake of disaster? Which of them would have thought that an openly gay rugby player, Mark Bingham, would have been a hero on Flight 93, or that a gay Roman Catholic priest, Mychal Judge, would have confounded prejudice and fear in doing his duty in the collapsing wreckage of the World Trade Center? How many of them would have foreseen that some liberals would be among the strongest defenders of the war—from Tom Friedman of *The New York Times* to Christopher Hitchens of *The Nation*? Surely what post-9/11 America has shown is that those who viewed this country as socially decadent, morally confused, culturally bankrupt, and in need of a drastic spiritual revival were baldly, incontrovertibly wrong. Beneath the cultural flotsam of the 1990s was a sturdy moral and cultural tide—more inclusive, more tolerant, more diverse than ever, but

just as unmistakably American as any previous generation. The fact that some dour conservatives insisted on seeing nothing but gloom for so long is an indictment of their lack of faith in the American people, and ultimately in the American experiment itself.

**T**HE WAR REPRESENTS, then, an important opportunity for American conservatism. It can and should be a time when conservatives reassess their country and abandon some of the tired, fixed ideas that have hamstrung them in the past—moral Puritanism, cultural pessimism, libertarian escapism, neoconservative nostalgia. Don't get me wrong: Many of the schools of thought I've discussed here have important insights. But they need adjustment to new social realities and new geopolitical opportunities. Neoconservatives need to trust the administration more; libertarians need to face the reality of a country under mortal threat; theocons need to grasp more deeply the genius of the separation of church and state; paleocons need to open their eyes and see the health in contemporary American culture, as well as its problems. We have an imaginative and pragmatic administration—more culturally diverse than any previous Republican White House—leading a popular and important war. This war offers an opportunity to reintroduce Americans to a different kind of conservatism—pragmatic, decisive, inclusive, dedicated to a smaller but more effective government.

What would this mean? Not a drastic change. Junking the stimulus package would be a good start. Conservatives need to argue that September 11 showed deep decay in basic government functions, decay whose correction should take immediate precedence over other domestic policy concerns. Instead of bemoaning American popular culture, conservatives should also celebrate its openness, its growing tolerance, and its multicultural diversity as strengths that the war highlighted. But they should also argue that such diversity needs to be tempered by a unifying government and culture. I'm not the first to propose this, but why not take on affirmative action and bilingual education as impediments to a unified multicultural America? Why not tackle the scandal of teaching history in our public schools to help young Americans better understand the context of the defense of American freedom today? Why not appeal more aggressively to the demographic groups who were among the most heroic in the past two months—the rescue workers, cops, average businessmen and women, and middle-class patriots—who often feel alienated from the yuppie liberal ethos of some parts of the Democratic Party? Why not reach out to those American Muslims who have taken a stand against Islamofascism, rather than cozying up to some of the worst offenders? And why not win some gay votes by noting and praising the way in which gay Americans—from Mark Bingham to Father Mychal Judge—acted as patriots and heroes in an integrating national crisis? The alternative is to invite the left to use a successful war and a mobilized government to argue for a more intrusive, more meddling, and more stifling government when the conflict is over. It has happened before—ask Churchill or the first President Bush. And only conservatives can prevent it from happening again. ■

*"In an area where the lines are drawn sharply and harden quickly, this is very consciously not a party-line book. It is intended to open up the debate, not to narrow it."* — FROM THE INTRODUCTION

## Sacred Places, Civic Purposes

*Should Government Help Faith-Based Charity?*

Edited by E.J. Dionne Jr. and Ming Hsu Chen

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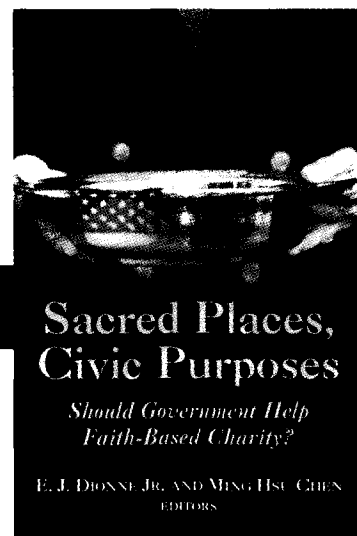
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### Voices from *Sacred Places, Civic Purposes*

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# Stanley Kauffmann on Films Down to Earth

IN HIS SHORT story "Killings," as in others of his stories, Andre Dubus looks down on his characters like a fairly friendly god, comprehending mortals' troubles with just slight amusement. Dubus, as god, has a uniquely blended view from above, understanding but cool. He lets his characters work through all the anguish, tension, bitterness that they encounter or evolve for themselves, something like animals in mazes, except he knows that they have souls.

Dubus begins "Killings" with the funeral, in a coastal Maine town, of a youth who was murdered by the estranged husband of a woman with whom the youth had been having an affair. The story fixes on the grief of the youth's parents, Matt Fowler, a shopkeeper, and his wife Ruth. The murderer, who is the scion of the local rich family, is out on bail and moves easily around the streets of the town, drinking and seeing women. He will be tried for manslaughter and will probably be out of prison in a relatively short time. These facts fester so furiously in the bereaved Matt that, with the help of a friend, he takes matters into his own hands. (There is no point in being coy about the ending of a story that has been in print for years.) Ruth is quietly pleased. Lynch law has prevailed, and Dubus, even if he pities their agonies, understands from above that he must let these people fashion their own fates according to their size and capacity.

Now Todd Field, a keenly gifted director, has (with the help of Robert Festinger) adapted the Dubus story for the screen with the title *In the Bedroom* (Miramax). The new title, like the previous one, is unspecific: it could be the title of at least half the plays and films in Western history. Field has kept almost all the elements of the Dubus story, but he has amplified them and, more saliently, has altered the tone. Not for Field the view from above of mortal frenzies: he wants to be close to his people, to bring them near, to register the heat of the fateful love affair, to plunge into the grief of the bereaved parents. With this increased proximity, he decides to "humanize"; he changes Matt from a storekeeper to a doctor—to give him more concern with people and to make the ending

more anomalous. But he does not explain why this doctor has a pistol. (The storekeeper carried it when he made night deposits.) To make the ultimate execution seem more impulse than plan, less malevolent, Field omits the preparations that are in the story, and he omits Ruth's tacit participation in the plot. In sum, Field has lowered the tenor of the story from one of fate, seen from above with Greek inevitability, to a domestic drama.

But—and it's a tremendous but—Field has directed it exquisitely. (He has directed before and has done some acting: he was Tom Cruise's friend in *Eyes Wide Shut*.) From the beginning he underlines apparent simplicities with hidden complications. The very first sequence is misleading, deliberately so. A young man is chasing a laughing young woman through a meadow on a sunny day. (It's New England, and Andrew Wyeth hovers over the scene: indeed, we later glimpse a book about the Wyeths.) He catches her; they tumble and kiss and laugh, and seem immersed in dewy young love. It soon comes as a surprise that, though he is a youth right enough, she is a divorcing wife with two young children. We then recognize that the director wants to show us surfaces that conceal contradictions. The film finishes in the very same vein: the last sequence consists of vistas of a tranquil Maine town where we have seen tranquility fractured.

Field works throughout the picture to blend the just-folks conventionality of individual scenes with a silence that snakes along underneath and that eventually wrenches the story out of homespun platitude into abysses. The two leading characters are Matt, the town doctor, and his wife Ruth, a music teacher at the high school. Theirs is the youthful son, college age, who is having what he himself calls a summer affair with an older woman. His mother, more than his father, is uneasy about the affair. The woman's husband, vain and aggressive and menacing, wants to get his wife back. Violence is threatened, and it arrives. The son is killed. The film then moves into its true subject: the parents' grief—or griefs, for they grieve differently.

We enter the shadows with Ruth and Matt. (There's a hint in the air of Atom

Egoyan's film *The Sweet Hereafter*, which also dwelled in this land of shadows.) The couple now seem encapsulated, removed from the world and from each other, as if they were clothed in invisible space suits or deep-sea outfits. Such a moment as when Ruth closes her eyes and leans back in a car while the voices of others continue around her, or when Matt meets a man in the street and the camera closes up on this or that bit of the man's front, an index of how Matt is anatomizing the man as if to wonder why he is still bothering to be alive to talk to this person—such moments are dramas of horrifyingly pure loneliness. The scene in which Matt and Ruth break out of their form-fitted prisons to quarrel, and to cry, only emphasizes their bewilderment about how to go on living now.

On the way to this rupture, the film achieves much. Helped by Antonio Calvache's delicate camera work, Field seems to inscribe his story on skin. I have rarely been so aware of the actual skin of characters' faces. Apparently no makeup was used, and without intent of tabloid-news starkness, each face is presented as a document, freckled, wrinkled, or whatever. Further, Field weaves the life of the town, especially its lobstering, into the story without heavy thumbprints. (One dubious touch: at Matt's regular poker games, one of his cronies quotes Blake and Frost.)

Nick Stahl, as the Fowlers' son, has the headstrong maleness of a young man whose hormones make him take risks. Marisa Tomei, as the divorcing wife, justifies his interest. In the role of Ruth, Sissy Spacek fills every requirement as if she were keeping a promise: nothing is false, nothing is memorable. As Matt, Tom Wilkinson continues to build a career of largely ignored astonishments. Wilkinson is English, and our relish of his performance does not depend on the fact that an Englishman has caught the Down East accent perfectly. He established his versatility long ago in his own country, from the Marquess of Queensberry in *Wilde* to the prole rowdiness of *The Full Monty*. By now it would have been surprising if he had not given full body to Matt. He is one of those acting treasures who seem quite content to go on being insufficiently appreciated as long as they get sufficient good roles.

*In the Bedroom* leaves us with the happy knowledge that with Field the American film scene, continually deplored as scraggly, can boast another admirable directing talent. But we can all hope that if his next screenplay is an adaptation of something as good as the Dubus story, he will not well-meaningly "humanize" it down a couple of notches. ■

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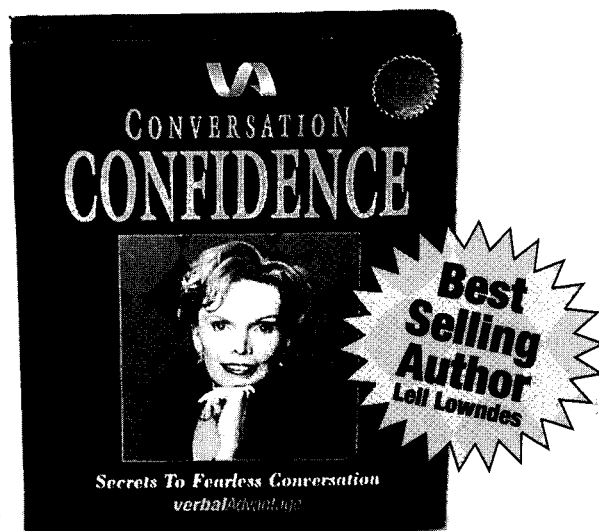
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# Jed Perl on Art Bookings

I.

**P**ICTURE BOOKS ARE the first books that any of us know. Before we can decode words or even letters, we are clutching their covers and awkwardly turning their pages. These books are our introduction to the mysteries of metaphor, to a combination of paper and printer's ink that can take us anywhere, reveal anything, whether fact or fiction or some mix of the two. You might say that picture books, even when we are too young actually to read them, are our primal reading experiences. And when we are grown-ups and find that we are again reaching for big and extravagantly illustrated volumes, our encounters can seem to be charged with many of the same expectations.

Such volumes, to a far greater degree than most books, are the product of a collaborative effort. There must be a number of minds and imaginations at play, not just those of the artist or artists whose work is represented, but also those of the people who write the text, design the layout, decide exactly how the book will be printed. Collaborative efforts pose special challenges for the critical imagination, yet the possibilities of the illustrated book seem to be little discussed, at least in print, at least now. This was not always the case. Fifty or sixty years ago, when sophisticated art books were just beginning to be available at popular prices, there was more discussion of matters such as the quality of reproductions, even by a critic of the caliber of Clement Greenberg.

Early in the last century, fine reproductions of works of art had been a sort of luxury commodity, but changes in printing technology made their increased availability one more element in the cultural boom after World War II. These books, many of which were first produced by Albert Skira in Switzerland and by Harry N. Abrams in the United States, were relatively affordable even with their gorgeous tipped-in reproductions. They proved a revelation to the book-buying public. Major writers were involved. Meyer Schapiro wrote the Abrams monographs on Cézanne and Van Gogh, published in the early 1950s; they are still in print. Clement Greenberg provided the text for the volume on Matisse in Abrams's "Pocket

Library of Great Art" series in 1953. Measuring four and a half by six and a half inches and containing some twenty color plates and a commentary on each painting, this book was priced at fifty cents.

It was Skira who published André Malraux's study of the history of art. This lyrical summation of the artistic imagination through the ages unfolds in not one but a number of volumes, with the steadily dramatic juxtaposition of reproductions in black-and-white and color achieving a visual flow of symphonic richness and complexity. *The Psychology of Art*, as Malraux's work was originally titled, is perhaps the most sophisticated of all modern experiments in the imaginative joining of image and text, but it seems almost forgotten today, though *The Voices of Silence*, one of a number of versions that appeared over the years, still finds an admiring public among some artists and museumgoers.

Malraux's work has been attacked by art historians as vague and unreliable, while others have suggested that his claim that photographic reproduction could create what he called a "Museum Without Walls" endangered the unique one-on-one experience of a work of art. At the time that it appeared, though, *The Psychology of Art* was taken very seriously indeed. In a long and measured review in *Partisan Review* in 1950, Joseph Frank found in Malraux's book resemblances to Nietzsche's "coruscating verbal brilliance" and way of using "contemporary aesthetic phenomenon . . . to offer a new insight into the universal meaning of art." And Edmund Wilson concluded in *The New Yorker* that it would not be "out of place" to compare it with "inquiries into mankind's position and purpose" that elude conventional genres, such as *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, *Das Kapital*, and *War and Peace*.

**I**N THE 1950s, painting and sculpture were the focus of the majority of sumptuous art books, but nowadays the most beautiful volumes are often devoted to photography. This may reflect a general sense in the art world that photography is the form to which all other forms have been aspiring—that the Museum Without Walls that is made out of photographs has become the whole of the museum. I do not accept that proposition, but the extraordinary frequency with which beautifully designed and produced

photography books have appeared in recent years may well lead us to conclude that the art of photography is, at least for the time being, the picture book's destiny.

Certainly no book about painting or sculpture published this year can compare with the tempered opulence of **Ansel Adams at 100** (Little, Brown, \$150). This volume, which accompanies a show that is in San Francisco until January, aims to free Adams from the reputation of picture-postcard prettiness that overtook his work in the last thirty years. We are returned to the romantic delicacy and force of his images of mountains and snow-dappled trees in the American West. We see Adams adapting the astringency of the straight photography aesthetic that was beginning to emerge in the 1910s and 1920s, giving it a surge of old-fashioned sublimity—and a close-grained sumptuousness.

*Ansel Adams at 100* is one of several recent photography books that benefit immeasurably from the presence of texts by John Szarkowski, who was for many years the curator of photography at the Museum of Modern Art. The essays that Szarkowski is writing these days have a remarkable broadness; you feel that a man who has been thinking about photography for a lifetime is offering some deeply pondered summations. He begins by speaking of William James's ideas about order in the world, and argues that "artists of the wild landscape might be thought of as a community of inventors who, generation by generation, produce and revise an evolving sketch of order out of the great farrago." He can illuminate a person or a period with a few words. Regarding Adams's youth in California, Szarkowski writes that he had a "strain of otherworldliness—sometimes approaching estrangement," and that this "alternated with moods of manic gregariousness. Beneath the compulsory optimism and misty pantheism with which California then faced the larger world, such dark moods were not uncommon." That is a fine capsule image of the artistic side of early twentieth-century California. The combination of writing of this order with ravishingly produced plates makes the book a wonder.

Szarkowski is expert at divining how photography's imaginative fireworks often emerge out of what is most prosaic or idiosyncratic in a culture. Those who respond to the speculative freedom of his writing will want to have his **Atget** (Museum of Modern Art/Callaway, \$60), a distillate of Szarkowski's long work with MoMA's great Atget collection. Here Szarkowski carefully nurses the few facts that we know about the man, using them as the springboard for a series of beautiful speculations. Of a group of photographs

of the gardens at Saint-Cloud, done in 1926, he writes that "they are about the horizon: the line that marks perspective's farthest cast, that separates the visible from the invisible, understanding from knowing, ambition from longing."

With observations such as this, Szarkowski brings Atget's Paris, so much the homeland of the modern imagination, close to Proust's Paris, which is the subject of a small book by the great photographer Brassai, **Proust in the Power of Photography** (University of Chicago Press, \$35). Brassai—who was, like a remarkable number of photographers, also a wonderful prose stylist—offers a series of verbal snapshots of Proust's various intersections with photography, observing the avidity with which Proust the man collected photographs of friends and acquaintances and revered theatrical personalities, how photography became a theme in his novel, and how the idea of the darkroom, of the development in private of impressions gathered in the world, may offer a larger metaphor for Proust's enterprise. Brassai's book, while not offering anything like a complete guide to Proust, is an enormously appealing salute by an artist who captured for all time the night world of 1930s Paris to a writer who, as much as any man who ever lived, understood what makes a metropolis tick.

"It *does* seem clear that honesty must mean something different to a magician than to an accountant," Szarkowski observes in his introduction to yet another new book, **Still Life** (Bulfinch, \$85), a collection of work by Irving Penn. Penn's style, with its cool, up-close imagery, has been so widely imitated in advertisements and editorial layouts that many people mistake it for a sort of generic statement. They miss the ironic shadings that give Penn's best still-life work, often done on assignment for *Vogue*, a quirky power. Ranging from postwar evocations of the pleasures of drinking and eating (glasses of deeply colored liqueurs, a bowl of bouillabaisse), to black-and-white work including close-ups of cigarettes and skulls, to more color work done in the 1980s and 1990s, Penn's images are not always as easy on the eye as they first appear. There is a reek of elegance to this work, but the reek is precisely

understood. The man has a sense of humor about photography's capacity to catch the lusciousness of the world. Penn takes a poker-faced joy in the surface of things. A swank stoicism animates such recent photographs as a group of blocks of frozen foods, pulled straight from their boxes; a glass of water, a loaf of bread, a pile of salt; a steak piled with two eggs, two pats of butter, and a single potato chip, titled "Cholesterol's Revenge."

Irving Penn's name will forever be linked with Richard Avedon's. They are the two Americans who revolutionized fashion-magazine photography after World War II, and Avedon also has a new book out this season, **Made in France** (Fraenkel Gallery, \$75). Here we are taken back to what may be Avedon's finest work,

own knockabout fun—playing pinball or having a drink at a café or visiting backstage at the Moulin Rouge. Often accompanied by men who look every bit as elegant in their tuxedos as Suzy Parker does in her Dior, the photographs are some kind of ultimate fantasy of Paris after the war, with young Americans tearing through the town. There is an almost Kabuki elaborateness to the clothing and the makeup, and the theatrical element is complete when Audrey Hepburn, Mel Ferrer, and Buster Keaton appear in a few shots. When Suzy Parker and her date, the actor Gardner McKay, nuzzle up at the bar of the Café des Beaux-Arts, we are in a fantasy world that is all the more incredible because Avedon insists on presenting it as cinema vérité.

Avedon's work in Paris in the 1950s, with its meticulously plotted informality, was a parody of the very idea of the rapidity of the camera's shutter as having some special purchase on the truth; he turned that idea into self-conscious theater. Among the pioneers of the direct approach was Dr. Emil Mayer, a Viennese lawyer and photographer, most of whose work was destroyed by the Gestapo after his death. **Viennese Types** (Blind River Editions, \$40) is a finely produced book that takes you into the streets and cafés of Vienna around 1910. Mayer's imagery has a pictorialist softness, but his pictures of people at work and at play are so exactly observed that



Irving Penn, *Bee Stung Lips*, 1995

the photographs that he did in the 1950s of sublimely beautiful models in the most fantastic Parisian fashions gallivanting through the City of Light. *Made in France* is quite a piece of bookmaking. The prints reproduced here were prepared for the engravers at *Harper's Bazaar*, who had commissioned the photo shoots in the first place, and they are now being presented on their original mounts, which are covered with handwritten and typed notations about the specifics of the clothing and the settings and how the images are to be laid out in the magazine.

This deluxe production, which goes to great lengths to simulate the knockabout look of layout materials piled on the editor's desk in the age before the computer, is just right for Avedon's photographs of women in couture, who are having their

after turning the pages of this album you may feel as if you have bought some roasted chestnuts from the man with the flowing moustache and sat reading a newspaper behind the plate glass window of that café. The dominant emotion here is not nostalgia but a sensuous response to the present, to the encounters of the street, to a morning spent visiting familiar places.

Helen Levitt, working in the streets of New York several decades later, catches a very different version of the quotidian. Her new book, **Crosstown** (powerHouse, \$75), is full of her famous sense of the dance-like casual feel of New York neighborhood streets in the 1930s and 1940s. What especially holds me here are the sections of color photographs, many taken twenty or thirty years later, in which the cacophony of the city—the signs, the

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trucks, the people in their jazzy outfits—creates a mellow yet jaunty unity, as if the compositional stresses of one of those pink and gray and green de Koonings of the 1960s had been discovered amid the double-parked trucks on Fourteenth Street.

**W**HAT CARTIER-BRESSON CALLED the decisive moment can be rediscovered, it seems, over and over again. No photographer who is working in this vein today exerts quite the fascination of Sebastião Salgado, whose impressions of people who have lost their homes in war-torn Africa or the Balkans or are looking for work in the growing cities of Asia are gathered in **Migrations: Humanity in Transition** (Aperture, \$100). Salgado's work, which has achieved an enormous popularity of late, also kicks off controversy. Some people are made uneasy by the beauty that he uncovers in the face of calamity and outright tragedy, by his way of drawing our attention not only to the shattered homes and the panicked refugees and the heaped corpses but also to the elegance of a face or the Tiepoloesque movement of the clouds that frame the horrible scene.

Salgado has been accused of aestheticizing disaster. His reply would probably be that we make a mistake when we look at the most terrible things that have happened to a person or a people and assume that this is the sum total of their experience. The beauty that Salgado sees gives his images a rootedness: he seems to be suggesting that people can hold on to or someday regain the saving significance of the places where they once lived, with their particular light and spirit. The lavishness of Salgado's black-and-whites has a life-force quality. His chiaroscuro is a form of hope.

Some may also find too much beauty in **New York September 11** (powerHouse, \$29.95), a collection of work done by Magnum photographers during and after the attacks on the World Trade Center. I think that the work here, much of it in color, gains strength from something fundamentally modest and unprepossessing in the attitudes of the photographers. Trained to move fast and to respond almost automatically, these photographers do not generally get in the way of what they are showing us. The photographs of the early hours of the murderous mayhem—by Steve McCurry, Susan Meiselas, Larry Towell, Gilles Peress, and Alex Webb—feel mercifully unedited. I have the impression that with these artists the craft is instinctive, that they are reacting directly as they move through suddenly unfamiliar streets and avenues and find this dusty hell. The final pages of the book are devoted to images of the World Trade Center before

the terrible day. Thomas Hoepker's photograph of the towers seen in dusky blue light from across the river, where they form the backdrop for some casual flirtations in a weedy lot, is an uneasy elegy.

Another perspective on recent events is to be found in **Gandhara: The Memory of Afghanistan** (Assouline, \$18.95), a modest guide to the sculpture and painting produced along the Silk Road in what is now Afghanistan from the second to the eighth centuries C.E. This art holds us through the complicated authority with which Greco-Roman forms are wedded with Asian impulses, achieving sometimes a melting eroticism, sometimes a sensuous severity. In a brief text, which contains a postscript written just after the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas was completed in early 2001, Bérénice Geoffroy-Schneiter writes that "the whole essence of Gandharan art resides precisely in its subtle blend of Indianity and Hellenism, of the art of the Steppes and the classical canons." André Malraux devoted many pages in his *Museum Without Walls* to the immemorial internationalism of this work, and it is precisely this quality that has made Gandharan art anathema to parochial minds in our own time.

## II.

**T**HERE IS NO mystery as to why photographs fit so naturally on the printed page. They begin life as pieces of paper, and it is possible to trade the chemical mix that produces a photographic image for the printer's ink of the book illustration and avoid jarring distortions. Any image created on paper will, by and large, make an easier transition to the printed page than a painting executed on canvas or wood, which is by definition an object of an altogether different order. **Belles Lettres: Manuscripts by the Masters of French Literature** (Abrams, \$60) reminds us that writing itself is a kind of picture-making by offering full-page reproductions of autograph manuscripts from French writers from Ronsard to Proust and Colette. The English translations allow us to make out even the places where the manuscripts become too chaotic to read.

Covering more than five hundred years, *Belles Lettres* includes a vast range of material, from rough drafts to immaculate sheets obviously prepared for presentation. This is a big and far-ranging volume, and although it does not have any overarching point, studying it can be addictive. There are some interesting combinations of writing and pictures. A page of Blaise Cendrars's *Elastic Poems* of 1919 is ornamented with slashing pen strokes and a telegraphic drawing of a crucifixion that

brings to mind Matisse's *Stations of the Cross*, done thirty years later. A manuscript by René Char is decorated with tracings after drawings by his friend Braque.

The perfect joining of image and text, which is suggested at certain points in *Belles Lettres*, is the great dream that haunts the illustrated book. **The Tale of Genji: Legends and Paintings** (Braziller, \$45) reproduces at close to actual size a cycle of small, square-format seventeenth-century images that follow the chapters of Lady Murasaki's classic novel of courtly intrigue and love. These scenes of luxurious aristocratic life, awash in gold borders that merge with stylized gold clouds, are presented from the overhead vantage point that gives classical Japanese painting a delicately tilted, otherworldly quality. The anonymous creator of these pictures is not a giant of Japanese art; there is not enough surprise in the decorative rhythms that give these compositions their animating principle. Yet as you turn the pages of *The Tale of Genji*, Lady Murasaki's gorgeously dressed protagonists, moving like chess pieces on an elaborately patterned game board, take on the haunted power of puppets in Bunraku theater. As for the question of how a major Japanese artist uses compositional asymmetries to create an emotional impact, there is **The Sketchbooks of Hiroshige** (Braziller, \$39.95). Hiroshige's dazzlingly abbreviated figures are not marshaled for narrative effect, but the speed and exactitude of his brushstroke is story enough.

Another opportunity to connect with a great artist's intimate musings is provided by **A Degas Sketchbook** (J. Paul Getty Museum, \$39.95). Degas, an admirer of the art of Japan, would probably have been pleased to know that the sly wit of his casually composed pages brings Hiroshige to mind. There are even some performers in Hiroshige's *Sketchbooks*, though no0 where near the number that are gathered in this small Degas *cahier*, which is full of tentative yet riveting observations of dancers and singers and the men who are attracted to them like bees to honey. Roger Shattuck, in his foreword to a new edition of **Apollinaire on Art** (Museum of Fine Arts, \$19.95), reminds us that Apollinaire said that Degas captured "all the bitterness and all the exquisite charm of the nineteenth century, which people have so often maligned without being willing to appreciate its delicacy, its subtlety, and even its cruel, lyrical truth." I feel all these mingled emotions in this *Sketchbook*. And for a view of the nineteenth century in which the bitterness greatly outweighs the charm, there is **Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor** (University of Minnesota Press, \$34.95). What holds most strongly in this expertly pro-

duced book are some images in which Ensor's densely naturalistic renderings—of a sleeping woman, of a dark iron stove—are circled by fantastic, fly-weight sketches of a Greek chorus of freaks and gremlins. The effect is pure Freud, with Jugendstil nightmares bubbling out of Ensor's stolid bourgeois renderings.

The strangest narrative among the new picture books must be **Darger: The Henry Darger Collection at the American Folk Art Museum** (Abrams, \$29.95), a compact volume that reproduces the meticulously colored drawings of hordes of girls, often with nothing on, that were dreamed up by Henry Darger, a Chicago janitor who died in 1973. Darger's drawings, done in pencil and watercolor on scroll-like pieces of paper, have developed a big following in recent years; he is the king of outsider artists. Darger's work, with its demented view of some small-town American childhood of the imagination, might be described as what you would get if you combined Norman Rockwell and the Marquis de Sade. Or imagine a Kate Greenaway picture book gone completely awry, with marauding gangs of military men bearing down on the little women in their summer camp idylls. Or are they little women? Despite the Mary Jane shoes, neat pinafores, pert caps, and pageboy haircuts, these creatures who are so anxious to take it all off generally turn out to be equipped with tiny penises. Darger gives the little-girl kitsch of the 1920s a gomy-own-way perversity, yet the girls are depicted in such vast numbers that they seem not only the toys of Darger's libido but a force that threatens to consume him.

I find something a little wan about Darger's drawings. The work has a remote, second-hand feel, with its even accents and bland color; a Sunday-afternoon-in-the-suburbs boredom muffles every twist of this maniac's imagination. I feel that I am in the presence of an uninteresting lunatic, but there is no question that Darger can get your imagination going. A good accompaniment to this Darger album would be *Girls on the Run* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, \$20), the full-length poem about Darger's work that John Ashbery wrote a couple of years ago. For Ashbery, Darger seems to suggest a let-the-lid-off-experience excitement. Ashbery wants to give voice to the swarming imaginations of Darger's children; I think he does it far better than Darger himself.

School was over,  
not just for that day but forever and for  
seasons to come.  
The reason was that the truth was just  
average  
on the iniquity scale, and nobody wanted  
to get involved.

Ashbery describes *Girls on the Run* as "after Darger," and of course his interest in visual artists is as long-running as that of any poet; he has produced an important body of art criticism, he has written about Parmigianino in *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, and he has collaborated with visual artists on a large and still-growing list of books. **The Vermont Notebook** (Granary Books/Z Press, \$15.95), in which Ashbery's prose is joined to black-and-white drawings by Joe Brainard, is back in print. Ashbery writes of autumn in New England, with its "darkness, eventide, shadows, roost, perch, leaf, light, evasion, sentinel, plug, dream, mope, urchin, distress." You can feel his impressions gathering, presented here at some point before

they have assembled into the autonomy of his poems. Brainard's drawings, often of ordinary objects (a T-shirt, a window, a television), do not have a magic that meets the prose; Brainard, whose work looks like Warhol one minute and Fairfield Porter the next, does not deserve the reputation that he now enjoys.

For a more satisfying Ashbery collaboration—at a far stiffer price—there is **Novel** (Grenfell Press, \$900), an astringent yet opulent affair in an edition of one hundred copies that joins an Ashbery prose poem from 1954 with a series of black-and-white drawings by Trevor Winkfield. Winkfield's images, in a style that is like John Flaxman on acid, are a perfect match for Ashbery's invocations of

## BUILDING A HEALTHY CULTURE

### *Strategies for an American Renaissance*

Edited by **Don Eberly**

Foreword by **U. S. Senator Sam Brownback**

**T**his book is about culture — the state of American culture, why culture matters, and what can be done to promote cultural health.

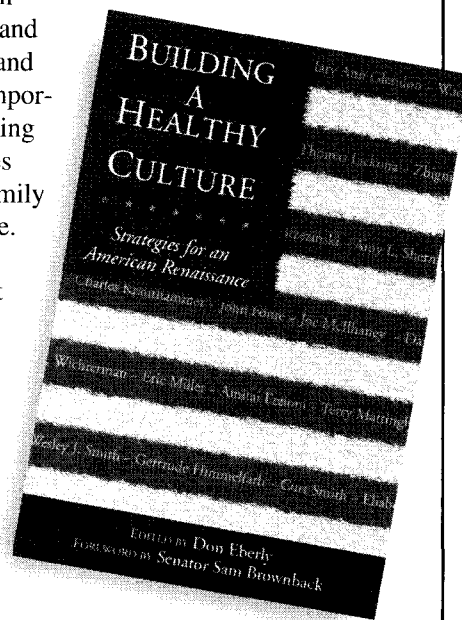
Composed of essays by well-known thinkers and unique in the breadth and depth of its discussion, this timely and constructive work argues for the importance of cultural health in maintaining a free and civil society and explores the theme of cultural renewal in family life, vocations, the media, and more.

Contrary to the common belief that major problems in our culture — moral license, sexual promiscuity, divorce, the loss of shame, shock, and manners — can be corrected through political action, the remedy pursued in this volume is to promote cultural renewal through cultural means — to replace bad culture with good culture.

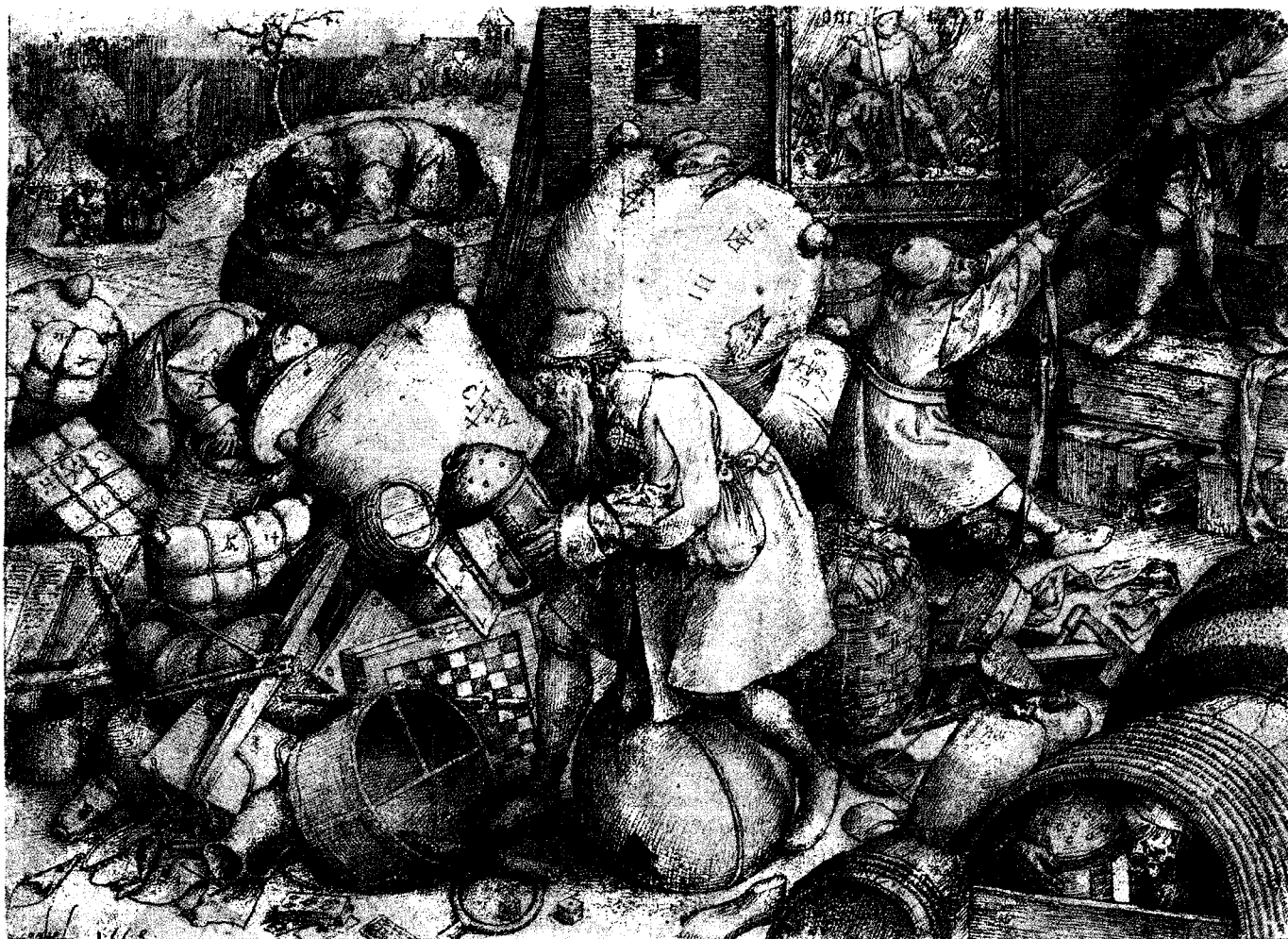
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Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Everyman*, 1558

"fragments of iron lace" and "the little ship" that has "just spouted away from the sandy dock." Both the poet and the painter are fantasists who in this instance operate with an almost Neoclassical restraint. This volume, with its big format, thick rag paper, and richly inked blacks, is one of the most beautiful illustrated books of recent years; it has an emotional tingle like bare black branches seen against pristine snow.

### III.

**C**OLLABORATIONS BETWEEN painters and writers have a very ancient history, a history that is fueled by the ageless utopian promise of an alliance of all the arts. In the twentieth century, there were many painters and writers who dreamed of a unity of the arts, but there were also many people who were inclined to argue that the visual arts should exist in a state beyond the reach of words. That argument for the purity of visual experience has recently gone into what will no doubt be a temporary eclipse. And the result has been a resurgence of interest in allegory and narrative and sub-

ject matter of all kinds, interests that had to some degree gone underground since the days of the Surrealists in art and the Warburgians in art history.

In the museums, exhibitions of Northern European Renaissance art, with its deeply encoded meanings, have a renewed fascination, an outstanding example being **Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Prints and Drawings** (Yale University Press, \$60). This show, which has been at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York this fall, pairs the allegorical drawings that Bruegel designed to be reproduced as engravings with the relevant prints and also includes a large group of Bruegel's landscape drawings as well as remarkable works by some of his contemporaries. There is a giddily uncoiling power to Bruegel's imagination. The landscape drawings join a fervor for the particulars with a feeling for vastness that is almost Oriental in spirit. In the allegorical works we are carried through a seemingly endless succession of piquant incidents, until a picaresque visual narrative has been unfurled. Some of these drawings, with their one-thing-just-leads-straight-to-the-next visual comedy,

are like divine versions of Rube Goldberg contraptions. Nothing can match the experience of seeing such drawings firsthand, but this intelligently produced catalogue comes pretty close. I was particularly taken with the discussion of Bruegel's relation to Italian drawing styles in Martin Royalton-Kisch's "Pieter Bruegel as a Draftsman: The Changing Image," in which complicated questions of stylistic influence are described with an extraordinary directness and simplicity.

The allegorical elaborations of Bruegel's designs for prints were seen in his time as related to the work of Bosch, who has also been the subject of a show this season, at the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. The interest of **Hieronymus Bosch: The Complete Paintings and Drawings** (Abrams, \$60) is that it brings together works definitely attributed to Bosch with a large body of drawings and paintings from his studio or by his followers. Although the layout is sometimes a bit too fancy, with details presented in ways that, while graphically dramatic, do not necessarily underscore the drama of the painting, the images, joined with useful texts by three European scholars (Jos

Koldeweij, Paul Vandenbroeck, and Bernard Vermet), pull us into a vision of supreme weirdness that holds us with its paradoxical lucidity.

Bosch's horrors are so tenderly described that they can seem beatific; his monsters have a crystalline beauty. His works are extremely rare; he is almost impossible to understand if you have not been to Holland or Spain. The same is probably true of the painter of the Isenheim Altarpiece, the subject of Horst Ziermann's **Matthias Grünewald** (Prestel, \$75). Grünewald, like Bosch, is one of those artists whose small body of work describes a temperament and a sensibility so unique that it seems to represent a climate of feeling unto itself. An entire worldview is contained in the contorted fingers of any hand that Grünewald ever drew or painted; he gives tormented emotions a rare exultation.

**M**USEUMGOERS WHO WISH to unlock the enigmas of Northern European art—of how artists created such sparkling details, such startlingly true-to-life effects—may be tempted to pick up a copy of the artist David Hockney's **Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters** (Viking Studio, \$60). Hockney's thesis here is that artists since the fifteenth century have been more heavily reliant on various kinds of optical devices to construct accurate representations of the world than has hitherto been believed. The core of this book, which is chockablock with reproductions of works by Van Eyck and Caravaggio and Vermeer and a host of other artists, is the extensive captions in which Hockney argues that certain sharp-focus effects and peculiar shifts in vantage point or perspective are the result of the use of mirrors and lenses and the various kinds of refocusing that these devices can require. The book has its origins in Hockney's belief that Ingres used a camera lucida, a prism that makes it possible for the artist to see simultaneously the subject in front of him and the paper on which he is drawing. Hockney, who has always had a knack for giving a pop appeal to the inner workings of the artist's studio, suggests a demystification of the Old Masters, and that may be useful to a certain degree.

Hockney is a complex figure, a man who understands, as he says, that optics do not make works of art, but who would also like to wow the wide public by suggesting that what Van Eyck or Ingres might have done with lenses is part of a history of the technological development of art that leads to photography and then to the computer. Hockney may believe that optical devices can help an artist to give shape to his most private imaginings, but the

book is an audience-grabber because it suggests a technophile sensibility. As for the drawings that Hockney has been doing in the past few years, inspired by what he believes is Ingres's use of the camera lucida, they are a classic demonstration that art has nothing much to do with gadgetry. Hockney may well be right about Ingres and the camera lucida, but the klutzianness of Hockney's pencil drawings only underscores the extent to which the magic of those Ingres drawings is a triumph not of science but of sensibility. It is the artist, as Hockney himself admits, who has to create a sense of sculptural fullness, and Hockney is not up to the task, no matter what equipment he has on hand. Suddenly it seems to matter very little whether or not Van Eyck used mirrors or lenses.

Hockney's obsession with the optical apparatus that was available in the studios of the Old Masters is intriguing, but it can also seem symptomatic of an art world in which many people are no longer convinced that works of art have an inviolable, stand-alone formal value. There are dangers in becoming too attached to the idea that artists and scientists and engineers—or, for that matter, artists and writers—speak the same language. (Robert Rauschenberg was once a great supporter of art-and-engineering experi-

ments, and the results look ludicrous today.) Analytical pyrotechnics should not become a sort of replacement for what is missing in an image; analysis should not be a bulwark or a smoke screen that keeps us from a direct experience of images that may not require or justify as much explanation as they are given.

Mary Tompkins Lewis is an art historian who obviously subscribes to this view, and her book **Cézanne** (Phaidon, \$19.95) stands out as a study in which the pressure of literary forms and ideas, which was so strong in nineteenth-century culture, is given its rightful place in a broad assessment of a great painter's achievement. Lewis writes out of an understanding of how the literary meanings that lie behind an image are re-made in the process of building a work of visual art. She is remarkable, for example, on the difficult subject of Cézanne's *Mardi Gras*, that surprisingly grave image of the Pierrot and harlequin of the *commedia dell'arte*. Lewis sees Cézanne "stepp[ing] back from his immediate visual motif to create a monumental costume piece that explores, as did the *commedia dell'arte* itself, the creative tension between traditional forms of narrative and the theatrical language of artifice, masquerade and improvisation."

This new study of Cézanne is part of Phaidon's "Art and Ideas" series, and

# Camelot at Dawn

Jacqueline and John Kennedy  
in Georgetown, May 1954

Photographs by Orlando Suero  
Text by Anne Garside



"These pictures of Jack and Jackie show a youthful innocence that is almost breathtaking. They look like college students as well as newlyweds, their faces unmarked by the troubles that lay ahead. A wonderful, early, carefree glimpse of these two people before they changed the world."

—Ben Bradlee

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—Letitia Baldrige

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Lewis takes the mandate to address the general reader as an occasion to frame Cézanne's life in the kind of broad terms that will be of interest to the most sophisticated reader. She has a delicate way of connecting Cézanne's peasants and still objects to a resurgence of interest in Provençal traditions; she deals with tricky questions of interpretation while never losing track of the ultimate autonomy of the work of art. Cézanne's elusive relationship with subject matter may strike some as signaling the modern retreat from certain kinds of meanings, but one can also argue that Cézanne's there-but-not-there attitude toward allegorical or psychological or narrative content became a model for the twentieth century.

Matisse raises similar difficulties in interpretation. In **Matisse Portraits** (Yale University Press, \$55), John Klein confronts a very challenging subject. Although I am unconvinced by his attempts to locate Matisse's work in a broad analysis of the social nature of portraiture, this art historian does have a real gift when it comes to interpreting specific works of art. Klein respects Matisse's psychological elusiveness; he is not flummoxed by Matisse's veiled emotions. What is remarkable about Klein's approach is that without in any way denying the artist's abiding faith that the feeling is in the form, he presses at the particulars of those forms, bringing in biographical information that deepens our understanding of the paintings. His book is a reminder that Matisse himself saw his interest in portraiture as a key aspect of his work; one of his last projects was a book called *Portraits*, a careful selection of works spanning his entire career for which he wrote one of his longer texts. *Matisse Portraits* is also valuable as a gathering of far-flung images; I have never seen so many of Matisse's self-portrait drawings and prints together in one place, and they give an electrifying picture of the man's shifting moods.

Books such as Klein's *Matisse Portraits* and Lewis's *Cézanne* bring image and text together in a way that keeps eye and mind in a state of happy collaboration. So too does Robert L. Herbert in **Seurat: Drawings and Paintings** (Yale University Press, \$65), a collection of essays written over a period of decades in which an important scholar knits Seurat's figure compositions into the imaginative world of nineteenth-century Paris and reveals some fascinating patterns and unexpected relationships. To learn about aspects of a work of art that are not immediately evident even as you weigh that information against the evidence of your eyes is an opportunity that the best illustrated books have always given us, and it is an experience that can feel tonic, cura-

tive. To meet the challenge of image and text in juxtaposition can suggest a mediating process in an art world that has, for generations now, been going to extremes, split between those who believe that art is a matter for the eye with the mind pretty much shut off, and those who believe that art is a play of the imagination with no recourse to the evidence of the eye.

Forty years ago, in an essay about the growing interest in art books, Harold Rosenberg worried that although "for a sound art education we need to augment our knowledge through art books," we also must not forget that we need to "develop our ignorance through works of art." This was Rosenberg's way of saying that we had to let ourselves be compelled by the freestanding, autonomous, perhaps ultimately inexplicable power of the painting hanging on the wall. Yet when Rosenberg argued, with a coating of irony, that "the art book is one means by which the individual painting is rescued from its corner

and brought into the program," he was perhaps giving too little credit to the possibility that we might be able to use a picture book as a way to see how the program works, to test its relation to the work of art. The images in a book can offer a standpoint from which to criticize the text; there is nothing more damning to an author's argument than a reproduction that refutes a written description.

Picture books bring far-flung images close. They fulfill a childhood dream of holding the world in the palm of your hand. A beautiful art book is an extension of the investigative spirit that drew us to picture books in the first place. The juxtapositions of illustrations with one another and with text are a way of re-mapping or re-imagining the world. And although such books are themselves sometimes beautiful objects, they are also instruments for the analysis of beauty. It is in this sense that even the most luxurious volume can turn out to be a primary text. ■

# The Accidental Jurist

By RICHARD A. POSNER

## John Marshall and the Heroic Age of the Supreme Court by R. Kent Newmyer

(Louisiana State University Press, 511 pp., \$39.95)

**J**OHN MARSHALL WAS not the first chief justice. The Supreme Court was formed in 1789, shortly after the Constitution was ratified, and Marshall was appointed in 1801. But the Court had little business in its early days, and the period of Marshall's chief justiceship, which extended until his death in 1835, was the formative era in the history of the Supreme Court and in the interpretation of the Constitution. Marshall dominated the Court, and his opinions shaped our constitutional history decisively by establishing the right of the Supreme Court to invalidate legislation as unconstitutional, by defining "commerce" broadly and affirming the power of Congress to regu-

late it comprehensively, by immunizing federal instrumentalities from state taxation ("the power to tax is the power to destroy" is one of Marshall's famous pronouncements), by limiting the effect of the Eleventh Amendment on the power of the federal courts to control state behavior, by affirming that Congress had implied as well as express powers to legislate, and by much else besides.

Through these decisions Marshall established the Court as a powerful branch of the federal government and the Constitution as a charter of national power. Before Marshall, the role of the Court in the constitutional scheme, and the degree to which the Constitution had established a powerful national government in place of the weak confederation that had preceded it, was uncertain. By the time he was finished, there was no doubt on either score, though the continued resistance of the South to the concept of a strong national government later exploded into civil war.

Marshall is one of the greatest figures

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in the history of the United States. But was he a great judge? Writing on the hundredth anniversary of his appointment as chief justice (this year is the two hundredth anniversary), Oliver Wendell Holmes was not so sure. With a touch of envy he acknowledged that "there fell to Marshall perhaps the greatest place that ever was filled by a judge." "Fell to" is the key: Holmes could not "separate John Marshall from the fortunate circumstance that the appointment of chief justice fell to John Adams, instead of to Jefferson a month later, and so gave it to a Federalist and loose constructionist to start the working of the Constitution." And Holmes continued: "A great man represents a great ganglion in the nerves of society ... and part of his greatness consists in his being *there*." In other words, Marshall and we were lucky. For Holmes was unwilling to say that "Marshall's work proved more than a strong intellect, a good style, personal ascendancy in his court, courage, justice and the convictions of his party," so that "if I were to think of John Marshall simply by number and measure in the abstract, I might hesitate in my superlatives."

IT IS CORRECT that greatness is the juncture of aptitude and opportunity, and so it is always due in part to luck. But I think that what Holmes—a man of erudition and culture, a man touched by genius, a man congenitally ungenerous in his assessment of others—was saying, with considerable insight, is that Marshall was simply not a very interesting person. He was just a very clever lawyer with considerable political savvy and experience, and generously endowed with what we would call "people skills." (None of these qualities, incidentally, were strongly marked traits of Holmes himself.) Marshall shared with Holmes great rhetorical flair, but unlike Holmes he was not introspective (he left few personal papers), or cultured, or speculative, and he was an avid businessman.

Holmes's essay delivered the verdict of a leading legal intellectual of 1901 on Marshall. Today, when virtually all legal intellectuals are law professors, one of them, David Currie, the author of the magisterial survey *The Constitution in the Supreme Court* (1985), finds Marshall markedly deficient in the qualities of a good judge, even of a good law student. In Marshall's most important opinion, *Marbury v. Madison*, which established the power of the Supreme Court to invalidate acts of Congress, Currie finds

invocation of the constitutional text less as the basis of decision than as a peg on which to hang a result evidently reached

on other grounds, a marked disdain for reliance on precedent, extensive borrowing of the ideas of others without attribution, an inclination to reach out for constitutional issues that did not have to be decided, a tendency to resolve difficult questions by aggressive assertion of one side of the case, and an absolute certainty in the correctness of his conclusions. ... *Marbury* illustrates among other things [Marshall's] tendency to conclude that the Constitution means what he would like it to mean.

Currie acknowledges that Marshall "impressed thirty-four years of constitutional decision with his own personality as no one else has ever come close to doing." In fact, "this utter domination is perhaps the greatest tribute to the force of John Marshall." Greatest, because the opinions themselves are no great shakes.

His disdain for precedent in general was extraordinary. ... He seldom missed the opportunity to rest a decision on two or three grounds when one would have sufficed. ... Sometimes Marshall was highly literal in his reliance on the constitutional text ... at other times ... he reduced the text to an afterthought ... time and again he seems to have been writing a brief for a conclusion reached independently of the Constitution. ... In short, though Marshall has been generally admired, it is difficult to find a single Marshall opinion that puts together the relevant legal arguments in a convincing way.

These assessments raise questions that Kent Newmyer's fine biography can help us answer. How could Marshall have been so successful a chief justice if, in an era before there were any law clerks, he could not (or at least did not) write a single first-rate judicial opinion, and was not himself intellectually outstanding? May law professors perhaps have an erroneous view of what it takes to be a great judge, and of what makes a judicial opinion first-rate? Should greatness be assessed *sub specie aeternitatis*, or with reference to a person's historical circumstances?

BORN IN 1755 on the Virginia frontier to a man who later became a successful land speculator, Marshall had limited formal education (though it included some college and even a few months at William and Mary Law School). In person—and not in his judicial writing, which is formal and elegant—he displayed a rough-hewn, "down home" style sharply different from Virginia "aristocrats" such as Washington (a friend of Marshall's father) and Jefferson. According to Newmyer, Marshall was a genuinely

modest man. I don't know how he knows this; none of Newmyer's speculations about what Marshall thought but did not say strikes me as convincing—a general problem of biography. But what is clear is that everyone who knew Marshall thought him modest.

He was, in addition, friendly, neighborly, outgoing, informal, unpretentious, easygoing, and seemingly devoid of malice: a very likable, even lovable—even "life of the party"—kind of guy. His laugh, Joseph Story said, was "too hearty for an intriguer." He was also (like David Boies, one of the best lawyers in America today) a famously bad dresser, and Newmyer explains that "his disregard for stylish dressing and the uncultivated twang in his speech ... distinguished him from the Anglicized gentry of the Tidewater and reminded him that he was not born to the purple"—reminded him, perhaps, but more importantly reminded others.

THESE PERSONAL TRAITS turned out to be enormous assets to Marshall's chief justiceship in two respects. First, they were the key to his domination of the Court. Far from being a bully, he was ostentatiously deferential to his colleagues, solicitous of their suggestions, eager to compromise. To promote collegiality, he cunningly arranged that all the justices would live together in a boardinghouse in Washington when the Court was in session. Second, his personal popularity blunted opposition by his political enemies, who, as it happened, were centered in Virginia, his home state, where he spent most of his time. (The Supreme Court sat for only a couple of months a year during Marshall's tenure.)

Virginia was a hotbed of the ideology of states' rights, and Marshall was correctly perceived as an immensely influential proponent of national power. But his enemies—with the important exception of Jefferson—found it difficult to dislike him. Patrick Henry, one of Marshall's strongest opponents, nevertheless wrote a letter of support for Marshall in the latter's congressional campaign "to refute [the opposing candidate's] charge that Marshall was a closet aristocrat who traded Virginia's well-being to advance his political career." In his letter Henry declared: "Tell Marshall I love him, because he felt and acted as a Republican, as an American." It was not Marshall's only "ideology-defying personal friendship"; G. Edward White, another leading student of the Marshall Court, also has remarked upon Marshall's "extraordinary personality, a central trait of which was inoffensiveness."

Marshall had other significant assets besides his personality. He was an extremely clever lawyer. Before becoming

chief justice, in 1801, in his mid-forties, he had more than two decades of successful law practice behind him. It is a characteristic of good lawyers, especially of good litigators, such as Marshall, that they are result-oriented. The desired outcome of the case is given them by the client, and they use all the rhetorical and tactical tricks of the lawyer's trade to achieve that outcome. Litigators are sophists, as Plato told us long ago. Marshall, said one contemporary observer, had the "wily intellect of a superb lawyer."

He wanted to make the Supreme Court, despite its apparent weakness, a fully co-equal branch of the federal government, and he wanted to make the Constitution authorize, indeed ordain, a powerful national government that would promote commercial values and check democratic excesses. He pursued those goals unremittingly, at times disingenuously, and even unscrupulously. A number of the cases that were his vehicles for achieving his goals were feigned or collusive, and so should have been dismissed out of hand (*McCulloch v. Maryland*, which involved the constitutionality of the Bank of the United States, is a famous example); and many could have been decided on narrower grounds (including *Marbury v. Madison*). Marshall treated the constitutional text as putty for judges to knead into constitutional law.

He also sat in cases in which members of his family had a direct financial interest and he had an indirect one; he spent a lot of time cajoling other justices in order to maintain an appearance, at times an illusion, of unanimity; he engaged in all sorts of tactical feints and thrusts that disguised his true intentions; he was an unabashed promoter of property and contract rights, and an uncompromising foe of populist state legislatures; and he did what he could to improve the electoral prospects of Federalists. Newmyer loves Marshall, but even he is struck by "how much interpretive latitude [Marshall] carved out for himself," by his "habit of glossing over complex factual problems," and by his

## Temptation

Day was nearly breaking when we awoke.  
The winter storm was abating.  
It was the first day of creation.  
I did not care that we had no money.  
That what was between us was still as fragile  
as the sheer of our curtains.  
We had returned from Italy.  
The image of Christ's hand  
raised in blessing, the face of the Virgin  
suffused with light, the naked  
Child was in my head.  
I thought of the divine foreknowledge  
that lies behind her strange smile  
and I wanted it.  
Last night's storm hit so hard  
the tree had fallen, exposing  
the writhing roots, the marks  
like scratches where it had hit on its bark.  
I ached for something greater  
to take possession  
like sap in the belly  
of the tree  
necessary  
to go on living.  
The entire city was snowbound.  
Ice formed intricate crevices  
along our window. The trees  
along the tree-lawn  
except for the one sacrificed  
by the storm were bathed in robes of white.  
In the harsh light of that evening  
like the force of two celestial planets  
colliding into one, I felt it take hold.  
I pictured the fresco, the gold light  
circling her head. The stab  
so severe it sliced into the center  
of my being. When we peered  
out the window the scene before us  
was no less serene or benevolent  
than the nativity: the shadow  
of the tree's icy arms spread out  
like an angel's in the snow, the lip of light  
creeping, the quickening of day upon us.  
Through the reflection of our breath on the cold glass  
I saw your round Italian features  
distilled in the clairvoyant image  
of the child. The wind picked up,  
leaving no evidence  
of how it might enlighten  
or harm.

Jill Bialosky

Many of the criticisms that Currie and Newmyer and other modern scholars make of Marshall's judicial performance are anachronistic. It was much more difficult to keep track of precedents before the modern era of legal research aids, and modern conflict of interest rules are much more stringent than those of Marshall's time. The modern scholars also give too little weight, I think, to the power of Marshall's rhetoric. As Aristotle taught long ago, in areas in which exact reasoning cannot be employed and certainty is therefore unattainable, rhetoric is a legitimate as well as a powerful strategy of persuasion. Earlier I cited Marshall's famous aphorism that the power to tax is the power to destroy. Here is a minor example of his rhetorical panache, from a case in which the issue was whether the owner of neutral goods carried on a belligerent vessel called the *Nereide* should be deemed a co-belligerent, making the goods subject to being seized as a prize of war. (In this and in the following quotations, I have modernized Marshall's punctuation.)

With a pencil dipped in the most vivid colors, and guided by the hand of a master, a splendid portrait has been drawn exhibiting this vessel and her freighter [the owner of the cargo] as forming a single figure, composed of the most discordant materials, of peace and war. So exquisite was the skill of the artist, so dazzling the garb in which the figure was presented, that it required the exercise of that cold investigating faculty which ought always to belong to those who sit on this bench to discover its only imperfection: its want of resemblance. The *Nereide* has not that centaur-like appearance which has been ascribed to her. She does not rove over the ocean hurling the thunders of

war while sheltered by the olive branch of peace. She is not composed in part of the neutral character of Mr. Pinto [the owner of the cargo], and in part of the hostile character of her owner. . . . She conveys neutral property which does not engage in her warlike equipments, or in any

employment she may make of them; which is put on board solely for the purpose of transportation, and which encounters the hazard incident to its situation; the hazard of being taken into port and obliged to seek another conveyance should its carrier be captured.

And here, from the famous opinion in *Marbury v. Madison*:

It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases must of necessity expound and interpret that rule. If two laws conflict with each other, the Courts must decide on the operation of each. So if a law be in opposition to the Constitution, if both the law and the Constitution apply to a particular case so that the Court must either decide that case conformably to the law disregarding the Constitution; or conformably to the Constitution disregarding the law, the Court must determine which of these conflicting rules governs the case. This is of the very essence of judicial duty. If then the Courts are to regard the Constitution, and the Constitution is superior to any ordinary act of the legislature, the Constitution and not such an ordinary act must govern the case to which they both apply. Those then who controvert the principle that the Constitution is to be considered, in court, as a paramount law are reduced to the necessity of maintaining that Courts must close their eyes on the Constitution, and see only the law.

And here, from *McCulloch*, is the declaration of “loose construction” that, as Holmes remarked, is one of Marshall’s great legacies:

In considering the question [whether Congress has the power to create a bank as a measure “necessary and proper” to the carrying out of Congress’s express legislative powers], then, we must never forget that it is a *constitution* we are expounding.

**M**ARSHALL’S SUCCESS AS chief justice was due also to his political experience and to his political acumen. Political adroitness was a natural extension of the personal qualities that made him such a likable person. But an extension it was: high-level political experience both in Virginia and in the national government (as emissary to Revolutionary France, as a member of the House of Representatives, and as secretary of state) convinced him (as had his service in the Continental Army during the Revolution) of the hopelessness of confederacy, and therefore of the need for

a strong national government. These experiences also educated him in how far the Supreme Court could flex its muscles without impairing its influence. Marshall was careful to avoid outright confrontations with the other branches of the national government; the only federal statute he voted to hold unconstitutional, the statute involved in *Marbury v. Madison*, was a statute expanding the power of the federal courts.

Marshall was politically moderate. He was a Federalist distrustful of democracy and populism, and fearful of Jefferson as a radical in the grip of French Revolutionary ideas (Newmyer remarks that “the basic tenets of [Marshall’s] jurisprudence” were “undying distrust of state legislative government and unqualified respect for the rights of private property”), but he was a moderate Federalist. He was allied with John Adams in opposition to the extreme Federalists who wanted to fight France, and he was opposed to the Alien and Sedition Act. As a consequence of these positions he was distrusted by many Federalists as a “wet”—which made him more palatable to the anti-Federalists.

**T**HIS CLEVER, POLITICAL, conservative (but not too conservative), eloquent, and “clubbable” lawyer—this man who, in striking contrast to Jefferson, “moved comfortably in the experiential, nontheoretical gradualist world of incremental change”—does not sound much like Holmes either, or like a modern law professor. Yet it was his particular attributes (plus his longevity) that enabled him to exert such an enormous and generally salutary influence on the Court, on constitutional law, and on the nation. His skill at forging unanimity, for example, made the Court seem more businesslike and effective than the fractious legislatures with which, in effect, it competed for constitutional supremacy—made the Court seem, in Newmyer’s words, “an oasis of rational discourse.” Seemingly little things can make a big difference. By abolishing the previous practice by which each justice would deliver an opinion in each case, and substituting assignment to one justice to write an opinion for the whole Court, Marshall substituted a single voice (usually his own) for a cacophony.

Some people think that the Court took a wrong turn in Marshall’s day, that he made the Supreme Court too powerful in relation to the other, more democratic branches of the federal government, and the federal government too powerful in relation to the states; that he succeeded too well in “identifying the Court with the Constitution.” But the danger that the new nation might dissolve back into the loose

association created by the Articles of Confederation, or even into a set of completely independent nation-states, was considerable in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and John Marshall’s Court did much to check these fissiparous tendencies. For this, most of us are profoundly grateful.

Could Marshall have achieved this coup by being a “good judge,” in Currie’s sense—scrupulous about the facts, respectful of precedent, insistent on deciding a case on the narrowest possible grounds? I doubt it. Those are, at best, precepts to guide judges in a mature legal system. But the creator of the system must be a buccaneer, like other innovators. He brings about, by main force as it were, a “paradigm shift” that enables his successors to practice “normal science.” That is a pretty accurate description of the relation between Marshall and his avatars. Just as students of science find it easier to describe the “scientific method” used in normal science than to explain genuine innovation, so students of law find it easier to specify the qualities of a well-behaved and modest judge who follows the path marked out by the innovators than to explain the qualities of an innovator such as Marshall or Holmes. The distinction is obscured by Currie’s implication that the qualities of a good judge are historically constant. It was the extraordinary fit between Marshall’s kit of qualities and the volatile historical setting in which he worked that explains his success and his greatness.

**H**IS ACHIEVEMENT WAS indeed remarkable. Yet Holmes was probably right in his intimation that the particular combination of qualities that carried Marshall to greatness (and with him the Court and the nation) is not terribly unusual—which, if so, makes luck loom very large in Marshall’s success, as Holmes doubtless believed. Even today, a very bright lawyer, with a lively and attentive personality and genuine political aptitude, and with significant high-level political experience as well, and unobscured with doctrinal purity, is not a rare avaris in the American legal profession. There are quite a number of such lawyers in the judiciary itself—but they do not shine with anything like the brightness of John Marshall.

One reason for this sad situation, perhaps, is the decline of rhetoric. It is no longer emphasized either in education or in legal practice, or even in judicial opinion writing, which is nowadays largely delegated to fledglings, the law clerks. But finally we must remember, if we are to understand and to appreciate Marshall, that greatness is the result of the juncture of talent and opportunity, not of talent

alone. If we dismiss (a bit unfairly) John Jay, John Rutledge, and Oliver Ellsworth, the three chief justices who preceded Marshall, and who in the aggregate served fewer than twelve years, and if we thus regard Marshall as the “real” first

chief justice, then he is the occupant of a role that only one person can play in the history of a nation; and if that person plays it well, he will be the greatest judge in the nation's history. And that was the role that “fell to” John Marshall. ■

# States of Emergency

By SUNIL KHILNANI

## Indira: The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi by Katherine Frank

(Houghton Mifflin, 448 pp., \$35)

### I.

**T**HE GLASSY MEMORIAL that stands in the garden where Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her own bodyguards in 1984 is among the most visited secular sites in India. Morning and afternoon, busloads of Indians arrive from across the country, whole families together, young and old, noisy but respectful. Nearly twenty years dead, Mrs. Gandhi stays vivid in popular memory. In the view of most Indians, she was the best prime minister that they have ever had. She dominated India's public life from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s; and with the sole exception of her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, no other Indian has put so deep an impress on their country's life.

Yet she is a bogeywoman to India's political and intellectual classes. The Hindu-chauvinist-led government now in power contains several members who were imprisoned by Indira Gandhi during the Emergency, the infamous period between 1975 and 1977 when she suspended democratic liberties, while the left and liberal intelligentsia blame her for India's current travails, for its corruption and nepotism, its sluggish economy, its fraying secularism. Writers from V.S. Naipaul to Salman Rushdie have stitched her up: she lives in the literary imagination as a malevolent, megalomaniacal leader who ended the innocence of Nehru's post-independence idyll, and was responsible (in Rushdie's telling) for “the smashing, the pulverizing, the irreversible discombobulation of

the children of midnight.”

Indira Gandhi is independent India's most puzzling political figure. She was enigmatic and often opaque in person, and her political identity was no less elusive. In power, she seemed to be a woman of supreme self-assurance, exuding a haughty *froideur*; but privately she was diffident and self-doubting. “I was so sure I had nothing in me to be admired,” she confided to one of her close friends days before her death. She never conformed to any one of the conventional idioms of Indian politics—the saintly, the traditional, or the modern—but moved adeptly between them. Indeed, much of her success was owed to her recognition of the historically dislocated character of India's politics, to its existence as a collision field of different historical timelines.

She was the daughter of a politician who wore his principles on his sleeve, but she seemed to personify a ruthless instinct for political survival. What, if anything at all, did Indira Gandhi actually stand for? It is also difficult to assess her responsibility for the drift of Indian politics. Was she the instigator of a coarser, more clamorous, increasingly fragmented society, or was she simply a mirror, reflecting what was already under way? What is now clear is the deeply paradoxical nature of her legacy. During her lifetime, she appeared as the greatest threat to democracy in India, and certainly she weakened the constitutional regularities that her father had tried to establish; but the enduring historical effect of her rule was to throw open the state to popular demands, to make it accessible to new groups, and to make Indian society still more political. She branded a certain idea of democracy on the Indian political imagination. She made democracy ordinary: not pretty, just ordinary, and that is what the thousands of Indians who file past her memorial know.

Indira Nehru Gandhi was born on November 19, 1917, the only child of Jawaharlal and Kamala Nehru. The Nehru house in Allahabad, the estate known as Anand Bhawan, was established by Jawaharlal's father Motilal Nehru, a formidably ambitious lawyer of Kashmiri ancestry. Indira's early years coincided with the house becoming the epicenter of the Congress-led national movement that opposed British rule, and she was raised in a relentlessly political household. Founded in 1885 (by, among others, a British ornithologist), the Indian National Congress was initially a genteel debating society; but by the 1920s it had come under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi, who transformed it into a mass nationalist party committed to achieving Indian self-rule through non-violent means. Motilal Nehru, after some hesitation, and under pressure from his son, decided to throw in his lot with the Gandhian Congress. It was a decision that was to transform the fate of his family.

The Nehru family was an atypical one: indeed, across several generations it helped to invent an idea of the modern Indian family, which moved away from the Hindu “joint family” and toward a more internally spacious model, in which deliberation and personal choice were (within limits, of course) encouraged, and in which women were expected to take an active role. The story of Indira Gandhi's life is the saga of her making herself into a full member of this extraordinary and deeply political family. For being a Nehru meant becoming a political being. “Politics is the center of everything,” she told *The New York Times* in 1966, and she might have been enunciating the family motto.

She was to discover that living up to such a motto could be a strenuous and painful business. Sustaining this sense of the centrality of politics was a belief, shared by all the Nehrus, in historical destiny, in an assigned role on the stage of history. Nehru himself was steeped in this historical self-regard: he perpetually invested his personal life with historical significance, and Anand Bhawan must often have felt like a pageant of India's present and future history, with Mahatma Gandhi, Annie Besant, indeed the entire cast of India's twentieth-century political and intellectual life, all crowding its rooms and its corridors.

But the Nehru household was also marked by disruption, and often it could fall eerily vacant. Indira's parents, aunts, relatives, and family friends all went in and out of prison, at the pleasure of the Raj. Kamala, when out of jail, was confined by illness and often in the hospital. Indira frequently found herself in charge and having to run things from an early age. Her upbringing amid this debris of

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familial life invites psychological speculation about her loneliness, her insecurities, her fears; and a certain mythic portrait of her youth has emerged: the distant father, the spiteful aunt, the invalid mother. Katherine Frank reproduces the myth, but she complicates and enriches the picture in fascinating ways.

Indira's youthful relationships were rarely direct or proximate, but were played by distances. We know most about her bond with her father, and Frank, drawing upon the recent appearance of two volumes containing the larger part of their correspondence, places this relationship at the center of her account of Indira's adolescence and young womanhood. It was, as Frank terms it, an "epistolary relationship," conducted in a correspondence stretching forty years, one that reveals a great deal about each of their characters. Often confined within those great British institutions of self-improvement—public school, Cambridge, His Majesty's Prisons—Nehru developed an epistolary talent that made him probably the greatest Indian letter writer of the twentieth century (certainly the greatest in the English language). His first book, a sweeping survey of world history in which he tried to adopt a non-European perspective, was written as letters to his daughter from prison: an anti-colonial nationalist's version of the Victorian father's advice-book to his daughter.

**A**SIDE FROM INDIRA'S relationship with her father, Frank emphasizes her ties to her husband and her younger son as the decisive bonds of her life. These were important, it is true; but there was also another link—a more primary one, this one not with a man—that Frank underplays. Virginia Woolf once observed that women think back through their mothers, and in the case of Indira Gandhi this seems particularly true. It was a relationship lived for the most part in memory, since her mother died of tuberculosis in 1936, having barely reached the age of thirty-six.

Mother and daughter were only seventeen years apart in age, and they were often mistaken for sisters. But Kamala's illness made her seem older, and she rarely had the energy or the force of a young mother. She came from a background that was worlds away from the Nehrus (her family were unanglicized Kashmiris of modest means), and her life was also blighted by the torturous effort of becoming a Nehru. The strain broke her health and cracked her confidence. Indira came to detest the way her mother was treated by the family, especially by Nehru's two younger sisters, Vijayalakshmi Pandit and Krishna Hutheesingh. Illness was a diffi-

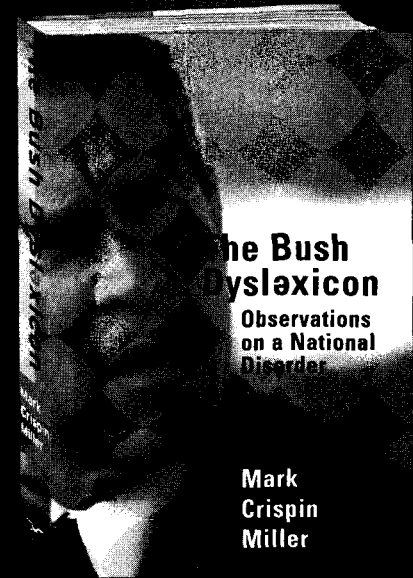
cult condition in the Nehru household: Nehru preened himself over his own fitness, and regarded illness almost as a moral failing, an abnegation of duties. The letters between husband and wife rarely strayed from discussions of health, to the point where an exasperated Nehru once wrote to Kamala that "there is a kind of sameness about you and illness."

Indira, herself frail, given to silent moods, and often in indifferent health, accompanied and nursed Kamala through much of her final illness. It was the memory of her mother's isolation and physical decline that led Indira to the man whom she finally married, in what appears to have been a compensatory act. In her last years, Kamala had befriended and taken comfort in the attentions of a young man, a Parsi of lowly background and somewhat obscure pedigree named Feroze Gandhi. (The Parsi spelling was later emended, it would seem at the Nehrus' suggestion, to blur his different origin.) He was a bold and engaging young man: swept up in the excitement of nationalist agitation, he was given to impulsive and romantic escapades. Nehru never liked his barracks-room style; and a few years after Kamala's death, when he learned from his daughter—who was then in England and studying at Oxford—of her desire to marry Gandhi, Nehru did all he could to dissuade her. Indira was herself ill with tuberculosis, and Nehru exploited her need for medical treatment to separate the two by bringing her back to India, in the hope that her head, if not her heart, might cool. The unpublished correspondence between father and daughter from these years has a searing, convulsive quality: it reveals a relationship that took on, in the wake of Kamala's death, a frightening intensity, charged with accusation and guilt, with anger and a profound emotional interdependence. After this period the two never again communicated so rawly and so openly. Things became unspoken and subterranean.

For a few years, Indira tried not to be a Nehru. She defied her father, married Feroze in 1942, and aspired to create her own domestic life. She and Feroze set up home, and they had two sons—Rajiv was born in 1944, Sanjay in 1946. Feroze tried his hand as a journalist at his father-in-law's newspaper. (Nehru was less than impressed, urging his daughter to edit Feroze's "Biblical English" and to curb his excessive use of "verily.") But Feroze's earnings were erratic, and the young family depended on money from Nehru. The marriage was also uneasy: Feroze was easily distracted by his roving eye, and in 1946 Indira decided to move with her sons back to live with Nehru, who was now effectively the head of the Indian government in New Delhi.

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The maw of politics was closing in around her. At India's independence in 1947, Nehru became its first prime minister, and was installed in the grand former residence of the British commander-in-chief. Indira took over the management of the household, and stepped into the role of her father's social hostess. She came into contact with Indian and international leaders, and during the 1950s underwent a slow self-transformation into a political being. In Frank's account, this decade saw the crucial metamorphosis in her life. Indira began to accompany her father on official visits (she traveled overseas two dozen times between 1949 and 1959, including to the famous Bandung conference of "non-aligned nations" in 1955, where she exercised a calming influence on her father's spleen), and from this time on there were constant nudges to her from within the Congress Party to stand for parliament.

She resisted those promptings, but she did involve herself more deeply in internal party matters (a subject for which Nehru had little stomach), and she began to move up the hierarchy of the Congress Party. Frank is quite right to insist, though, that her father was scrupulous in not involving her in political matters, that he saw her more "as an assistant than a confidante or adviser." At this stage she too seemed restrained in her ambitions: as she wrote to her father in 1953, "I do want to reorganize my life and get out of all the silly committees. I am so sick of people doing social work as a step up the political and social set [*sic*] ladder, and equally sick of all the vague goodness of the so-called Gandhians." But that same year she made a visit to the Soviet Union, and this seemed to give her for the first time a sense of her own stature. She began to offer unsolicited advice to her father about appointments and other matters, often put up to it by Nehru's manipulative private secretary, M. O. Mathai.

**F**RANK DETECTS A major shift in Indira's life in 1957: a sudden improvement in her health. In a chapter that has the strongest claim of any in the book to having unearthed new material, Frank shows that Indira had been battling tuberculosis. This is a shrouded episode in her life: none among her family or friends spoke openly about it, haunted by the fearful memory of the illness that killed her mother. The truth is that in 1939–1940 Indira spent almost a year in a Swiss sanatorium; but it was not until the discovery of new antibiotic treatments for the illness in the 1950s, Frank suggests, that she was finally cured. Certainly her appearance changed: her figure filled out, her complexion became radiant. She gave

evidence of her new vigor by campaigning strenuously on behalf of the party in the general elections in 1957, and in 1959 she became president of the party. But even that elevation did not convert her to the political life: she declined a second term, and from the evidence of her correspondence with friends such as Dorothy Norman in America, she was again contemplating a retreat into private life. Then things changed quickly and morbidly.

## II.

**T**HE NEHRUS ARE not only India's most political family: for many Indians they are also its ruling family, a modern "dynasty" rivaled only by the Kennedys, and like them enveloped in myth. That successive generations could have possessed such power in a democracy naturally raises troubling questions; and one of the most persistent of those questions is whether Nehru intended his daughter to succeed him and schemed to that end. The short answer is no. It was a series of chance events that took her into the prime minister's office.

In September, 1960 Feroze died suddenly of a heart attack. Despite their strained relations, his death affected Indira deeply, and further reinforced her desire for a domestic life away from politics (she even thought of moving to the English countryside). It seems also to have affected her younger son Sanjay, in ways that left Indira prey to his manipulation. Pupul Jayakar, a friend and earlier biographer of Indira Gandhi, noted that Feroze's death left Sanjay "bereft and resentful of his mother whom he held responsible for the neglect and death of his father." Sanjay Gandhi had fastened on his mother's weakest spot (after all, she had herself accused her own father of exactly such neglect), and he was to play on this in later years to disastrous effect. Indira's thin-skinnedness on this matter can be gathered from the fact that years later, when Salman Rushdie repeated the story about her neglect of Feroze, she sued Rushdie for libel.

Meanwhile her father was becoming increasingly dependent on her. Nehru was broken mentally and physically by India's defeat at the hands of China in the 1962 war, and his failing health meant that more responsibilities were put upon her. Rather than seizing this opportunity to thrust herself forward, she seemed to shrink from the political spotlight. In Frank's account, Indira, at the age of forty-six, found herself going through what "was actually an adolescent identity crisis [rather] than a mid-life one," trying to puzzle out who and what she should be.

Nehru died in May, 1964. He had

named no successor, but he had indicated his preference for a man named Lal Bahadur Shastri, who duly took over. Loyal, tactful, and politically skilled, Shastri considered it a matter of propriety to take in his mentor's daughter, and he offered Indira Gandhi a post in his cabinet, the relatively unimportant portfolio of Information and Broadcasting. Frank's explanation of why Indira accepted rings true: her guilt at having been something of a hesitant Nehru during her father's lifetime was now transformed into a sense of duty. Also, she needed the income. She had inherited no wealth, apart from the royalties from Nehru's books; the family mansion had been donated to the nation as a museum, and she could no longer live in the prime minister's residence. Feroze too had not left her any property.

Barely two years in office, Shastri died in January, 1966, having just concluded the Tashkent Treaty that ended the 1965 war with Pakistan. Faced with this unexpected succession crisis, senior Congress leaders were in confusion. They turned to Indira Gandhi, not because she promised to be a great leader in the line of her father—quite the contrary, it was her evident unsuitability for political power that attracted them to her. She was without any power base in the party or in the country; she was a woman, and a poor speaker, with no articulated political vision or ideological passion—a soft touch. How wrong they were. Once in office, power seemed to unleash a hormonal rush in her. At the age of fifty, she was rejuvenated. The desultoriness of her earlier years was shaken off and her life acquired a new keenness, as she discovered her appetite for power.

Her premiership opened with a flourish. A couple of months after taking office, she made her first overseas visit as prime minister. It was to the United States, and she took Washington and New York by storm. President Johnson promised nine million dollars in aid to India; and Mrs. Gandhi offered in return her understanding of the American adventure in Vietnam. Relations between the two countries seemed set to blossom, in contrast to the general chill surrounding them during her father's lifetime.

While she seemed to thrive personally, the broader situation facing her party and her country was grim. Economic crisis—brought on by two wars and successive monsoons—forced her into moves that backfired. A condition of American aid had been a devaluation of the Indian currency; but her announcement of a crashing sixty-percent devaluation of the rupee met with unanimous criticism in India. It seemed to confirm the old nationalist fear about India's vulnerability to international pressures, and eventually the fear

was stoked into a paranoia about national sovereignty. The hostile reaction to Mrs. Gandhi's move left a mark on her economic thinking: it convinced her to stick with protectionist measures, to adopt populist policies, and to mistrust dependence on foreign assistance, however smilingly it might be proffered.

In 1967 she had to face her first general election as prime minister; and it was also the first time she had to contest a parliamentary seat (until then she had been an appointed member of the Upper House). She won her own seat with a huge majority, but the Congress Party turned in its worst performance ever, losing control of eight of India's regional states (including the most populous ones), and it was left with a small parliamentary majority. Indira Gandhi seized this as an opportunity to strengthen her own position. Catching the party at its weakest, she remade it: she split it, changed its internal character, and pulled it leftward.

The Congress Party was the great historic symbol of national unity, functioning as a capacious umbrella-like structure. Its strong central command had always given a long leash to the leaders from the regional states, relying on the provincial bosses to tend to clients, and to deliver support and votes in return for benefits negotiated from the center. Mrs. Gandhi resolved to break free from the grip of the old regional leaders who had put her in power. She sidelined them in two ways. After splitting the party—which would have been unthinkable for her father—she changed the object of political loyalty from the party and its local leadership to her own person. She did this by altering the forms of party finance. Nehru, always prim about the mechanics of power, had left the vulgar business of graft to his regional bosses: they hustled money from supporters, and used it for electioneering in their own patches. Indira Gandhi abolished this system. Henceforth, cash was delivered straight to her private secretaries, and the distribution of election expenses to candidates was controlled directly from her office. The rupees came

first in briefcases, then in suitcases; and by means of "suitcase politics" she was able to create a material chain of fidelity between her chosen party men and herself.

She also set out to establish a direct relation with the electorate, again bypassing the party and its seasoned leaders. She accomplished this by shifting her rhetoric to the left, inventing a magical radicalism. Banks were nationalized, the princely families were divested of privileges that they had been constitutionally promised, and an electoral slogan at once supremely simple and blissfully hazy was devised: *Garibi Hatao*, or "Remove Poverty." An unim-

into India. There was international condemnation, except from the American government, which sided with Pakistan—a consequence of the game of cat's cradle being played by Nixon and Kissinger. It became apparent to Mrs. Gandhi that military action against Pakistan was inevitable, and she was given the pretext that she sought when the trigger-happy General Yahya Khan, the Pakistani leader, launched an attack on India in December, 1971. The war was short, and it ended in a total victory for Mrs. Gandhi. Her audacity and her decisiveness during the campaign were formidable.

In five fast years, then, Indira Gandhi had been transformed. In 1966, her father's old colleagues had referred to her as a "dumb doll," a "chit of a girl." Now, at the peak of her career, she was named the most admired woman in the world by a Gallup poll in the United States, and had become one of the very few non-Western leaders accorded respect in the citadels of world power. To her own people, she seemed to have become quasi-divine.

She used her new power to strike a deal with Pakistan at the ensuing peace summit held at Simla. About the perennial thorn of Kashmir, she established with her counterpart Zulfikar Ali Bhutto an informal agreement to observe as the de facto border between the two countries the Line of Control (the cease-fire line established after the Pakistan-instigated invasion of Kashmir in 1947-1948).

She followed this two years later by announcing that India had conducted a nuclear test, for "peaceful purposes." It was a coy admission of India's nuclear abilities, which in time developed into an effective "nuclear option" strategy. Her own role in deciding to take India down the nuclear path remains as ambiguous as her larger strategy: according to a leading historian of India's nuclear program, in the secret debate leading up to the decision "she listened and said, 'Let's have it.'"

In India's domestic politics, though, Indira Gandhi's political career was unfolding as a cautionary tale of democratic hubris. She had become so sure of her



Indira Gandhi by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

peachable sentiment; but as Indira confessed to a journalist, she spoke the language of socialism because it was what the people wanted to hear. In 1971 she called a snap election and ran a cult-of-personality campaign that projected herself as the sole issue at stake—as the unique scourge of poverty—and appealed directly to the poorest and lowest in the social order, to India's outcasts, Muslims, and women. She achieved a landslide majority.

International triumph soon followed. The military leadership of West Pakistan was at this time pursuing a genocidal policy against the Bengalis of East Pakistan, and thousands of refugees were flowing

legitimacy, based on her electoral success, that she convinced herself of the dispensability of constitutional constraints and procedures regarding the exercise of power. She had embraced a Jacobin conception of political power, an unfiltered view of democracy as direct and popular. Her actions had altered the meaning of democracy in the popular imagination, reducing it to signify quite simply the winning of power through elections, and neglecting altogether the sense in which it was also a way of regulating the exercise of power. This demotic sense of democracy spread over the Indian political imagination, both elite and popular.

**I**NDIRA GANDHI CENTRALIZED power, draining it away from the regional state governments and channeling it toward New Delhi. With the old arenas of parleying and decision-making within the party eliminated, she surrounded herself with a group of highly intelligent and sophisticated men, leftist and technocratic in bent, and mostly of Kashmiri origin: P.N. Haksar, D.P. Dhar, P.N. Dhar, T.N. Kaul. And her younger son Sanjay was now elbowing his way onto the political stage. He was an ambitious gadfly with a marked capacity to attract distasteful young men on the make. After various failed efforts to establish himself as the Henry Ford of India by developing a cheap "people's car" (he had trained, rather ineffectually, at the Rolls Royce works as a teenager), he plumped for a political career. He established a Youth Congress, a thuggish motley of scented young men with bad shoes, ruthless in their methods. This dubious body now began to fill the vacuum in the party created by Mrs. Gandhi's destruction of its organization and its leadership.

Indira Gandhi's haughty centralization and legislative abandon—she appealed to her parliamentary majorities to introduce sweeping legislative changes and constitutional amendments—provoked two waves of dissent, whose consequences still reverberate in India: the first resulted in the Emergency, the second in her own assassination. In 1974–1975, severe economic conditions sparked a series of popular agitations in the west and the east of the country, as well as a nationwide railway strike, led by the former Gandhian and socialist Jayaprakash Narayan. In June, 1975, a court judgment overturned Mrs. Gandhi's election to parliament on the basis of a tiny infringement of electoral procedure. She became convinced that there was a large-scale conspiracy to overthrow her, possibly with international backing. (It was not an altogether crazy idea: Salvador Allende had been deposed not long before, and Mujibur Rahman

was assassinated not long after, both with the involvement of the CIA.) Confronted with the prospect of resigning as prime minister, she decided to declare an Emergency, drawing upon state powers inherited intact from the Raj.

The Emergency lasted until 1977. Its history is extremely difficult to write, given the absence of definitive sources, the number of conflicting memories and views, and a generalized self-induced Alzheimer's among all who played a role in its events. (If the current Indian government contains some individuals who were imprisoned during the Emergency, it also contains some individuals who did the imprisoning.) Although the powers absorbed by the government in the wake of the Emergency's declaration were sweeping, and seemed to be the prelude to an era of authoritarianism, very little was actually done. There was plenty of concentrated nastiness, in which Sanjay Gandhi and his acquaintances played a leading role: the press was muzzled, political dissenters and opponents were imprisoned, sterilizations were enforced, slums were razed in the name of "city beautiful" schemes. But no major social or economic reforms were set in motion, nor were any Ceausescuan mausoleums built. The main victim of the Emergency was the constitution, and the liberal compass of India's democratic life.

Explanations of the Emergency tend to veer between labeling it the product of the biographical quirks of mother and son and seeing it as a lapse of Indian society once again ensconced in its ancient destiny: dynasticism, despotism, and the other Oriental vices. In fact, the Emergency was neither one nor the other. It was a critical episode in the history of the conflict between the two ideas—the idea of the state and the idea of democracy—that have defined, and competed for, the modern history of India. The Emergency is best regarded as a parodic version of the desire to return the Indian state to the hands of a do-good elite—at the very time when (as a result of Mrs. Gandhi's own electoral style) the democratic idea was achieving an unprecedented diffusion across Indian society.

In effect, she was stepping on the brake and the accelerator at the same time. By suppressing democratic freedoms, Mrs. Gandhi hoped to de-politicize India, and to entrust political decisions to a supposedly benevolent technocratic elite, to a "committed" bureaucracy and judiciary. In fact, the effects were the opposite, and she succeeded only in politicizing India still more profoundly. Deprived of their rights, people began to sense just how significant these might be. When she called elections in 1977, they exercised

their rights resoundingly and voted her and her party right out of office.

By 1980, though, she was back in power. The new government that had hoped to replace her—a ragtag of the disgruntled, the unprincipled, and the merely hopeful—collapsed in internal bickering. Within a few months of his mother's return to power, Sanjay Gandhi was killed in a plane crash while performing aerial acrobatics over the capital. It marked the beginning of Indira Gandhi's final, catastrophic phase in power. She now had to face the dissent provoked by her centralizing urges, and by the breakdown of structures that might have moderated these forms of dissent. Across the country, regionalist movements—always a potential form of political protest in India—escalated their demands and actions: some actually pressed for secession, all were prepared to use violence. In Punjab to the west, Assam to the east, and Kashmir to the north, the federal routines that gave democracy a local and tangible presence were effaced, as Mrs. Gandhi tried to exercise direct control over these regions.

In Punjab, during the post-Emergency years when Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress were out of power, Sanjay Gandhi had set in motion a process that was to result in the Indian army's attack on the Sikh Golden Temple in June, 1984, and in Mrs. Gandhi's death a few months later. In order to break the power of the Sikh political party, the faction-ridden Akali Dal (which in the late 1970s was supporting the anti-Indira Gandhi government in New Delhi), Sanjay—with his mother's connivance—cultivated a lithe young Sikh *sant*, or religious preacher, named Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Having helped to build him up for her own purposes, Mrs. Gandhi on her return to power sought to sweep him away.

**B**UT BHINDRANWALE WOULD not go gently. His militant sermons had attracted followers across the Sikh diaspora who were willing to die for him, and he committed them to an armed struggle for the creation of a Sikh homeland called Khalistan. Barricaded into the Golden Temple at Amritsar, he directed his men in a brutal campaign of terror. Finally the Indian army launched a massive assault on the temple. Whether or not Mrs. Gandhi personally commanded the use of force against this holiest of Sikh shrines remains unclear. But when her bodyguards took aim at her a few months later, they believed themselves to be very directly avenging their religion and community.

If Punjab was to prove lethal to her own person, the handling of Kashmir was to leave the country a truly poisoned

legacy. Kashmir had enjoyed distinct treatment ever since its troubled accession to India in 1947: constitutionally, the state was guaranteed a standing not available to any other states in the Indian Union. Its politics had long been dominated by Nehru's friend-turned-sparring-partner Sheik Abdullah—with whom Mrs. Gandhi had made a deal, in the mid-1970s, that seemed to balance Kashmir's special autonomy with its integral place in the Indian Union. At Sheik Abdullah's death in 1982, his son Farooq Abdullah succeeded him, but Mrs. Gandhi never trusted Farooq. Farooq was an unlikely leader (he was known as the "Disco Chief Minister"), but he struck out on his own, refused an alliance with the Congress, and—playing on Muslim sentiment—won the elections in his state.

For Mrs. Gandhi, a Kashmir ruled by a leader actively resistant to her was both a personal affront and a national danger. She was determined to oust him, and she urged the governor of the state—who happened to be her cousin—to dismiss Farooq on the grounds that the elections had been rigged (which they were, slightly; but not nearly as rigged as they would be under Congress governments later in the 1980s). Her cousin refused and advised her against this action, so she replaced him with a more craven governor, who did the deed. The result was the buildup, during the 1980s, of a tinder pile of resentment, ready to be sparked at the very moment when de-mobbed mercenaries from the Afghan campaigns were flooding into a crisis-ridden Pakistan, and when the messages of radical Islam were radiating out from Tehran and elsewhere.

### III.

**N**IRAD CHAUDHURI, in his imitably Indo-phobic way, once declared that "not one worthy biography of a great Indian or a worthy account of Indian life or civilization has come from an Indian. That is the true *trahison des clercs* in India." About biography, at least, he has a point. India's modern history is overpopulated with remarkable personalities, and it is a biographer's treasure trove; but the intellectual impact made by Indian biographical writing is trivial. In most cases, Indian biography is little better than hagiography or chronicle: the doings of the great, in modern recensions of the *Namas* of the Mughal emperors.

Katherine Frank's biography follows a number of earlier ones on Indira Gandhi, including two important studies by people who might be called "insiders," a highly critical but insightful book by Mrs. Gandhi's cousin Nayantara Sahgal, and a

sympathetic and rather dark biography by Mrs. Gandhi's onetime confidante Pupul Jayakar. What these and other studies make clear is that it is virtually impossible for anybody who already has an interest in Indian politics to write dispassionately about Indira Gandhi and her rule. Frank therefore comes to her task with a distinct advantage: her earlier biographies were on Lucy Duff Gordon, Mary Kingsley, and Emily Brontë, and prior to this book no one could have mistaken her for an "India hand."

The first part of Frank's book, dealing with Mrs. Gandhi's life before she became prime minister, is a good deal more successful than the second part. Frank writes sensitively about what it must have felt like to be a child of the Nehrus, and she manages to rehabilitate Mrs. Gandhi as a person. There are problems, though, with Frank's account of her subject's political life. It is always hard to identify exactly what a politician has actually done: the precise nature of his or her responsibility for certain actions, let alone for the consequences of these actions, is maddeningly difficult to determine. The relationship between an individual politician and his or her deeds or acts is much less clear than that between, say, a writer and his or her literary output—a symptom of what P. N. Furbank has called "the profound inauthenticity of the political life." For this reason, political biography can often fall off into a form of gossip and historically decorated rumor, into an elaborate variety of journalism. It tries to guard against this by referring to "sources," to documentary evidence, written or oral, that seeks to clinch the link between the biographical subject and a particular action or event.

**A**ND YET SOURCES cannot really solve the political biographer's problem. A biographer needs to be able to grasp also the relationship between the intention and the action, as well as to judge the nature of the consequences produced by the action. Only when this circuit is complete can we get some sense of the responsibility or otherwise that a politician may bear for a particular situation. To achieve this, the biographer needs a sure interpretative grasp of the political and historical field about which he or she is writing—a sense of the broader causalities that surround his or her subject.

Here the difficulties crowd in for Frank. Take sources first. For the duration of Mrs. Gandhi's pre-political life, we are able to get a fairly rich picture of the balance of her thoughts and emotions, the necessities and the contingencies that she faced. Frank draws upon published sources unavailable to previous writers, and she has resourcefully unearthed Mrs. Gandhi's

medical history. But when it comes to the second part of the life, the truly consequential part, Frank has much less to offer. It is a problem that faces all who try to write about India's recent history: quite simply, an absence of sources, both private and public, which makes it difficult in some cases to know what actually happened, let alone to make sense of it.

The Emergency is a classic instance: there are virtually no government papers available for this period. Frank has worked hard to piece things together, using interviews and whatever other material there is. But anyone who has tried to write about the Emergency knows that it is a Hall of Mirrors, where accusation and counter-accusation, information and disinformation, trip over one another's heels; and Frank indeed emerges bruised. Her generally sober and serious book has provoked something of a scandal in India, largely because of the pages given over to discussing the rumors surrounding Mrs. Gandhi's sexual life, but also because of its account of the roles played by Sanjay Gandhi and his wife Maneka during the Emergency. A paragraph in which Frank gives currency to an allegation that the two had arranged the murder of a well-known underworld boss drew the threat of a libel action by Sanjay's widow, and it has been deleted from subsequent editions.

Faced with these difficulties, and with her own uncertain sense of the driving energies of modern India's political history, Frank's biographical preferences turn scattershot. She ends up drifting between several possible idioms of explanation, variously invoking psychological quirks and scars, the compulsions of politics, and even, at a push, values and ideas. The paradoxical effect of Frank's final chapters, which rehearse the narrative of Mrs. Gandhi's political life and death, is to undo the portrait that she has built up, to collapse it into different elements. The inner complexity set out earlier is replaced by an image of Mrs. Gandhi as a weather-vane, as someone who had become a vehicle to be "filled" by others who "invested her with their ideology and values." The point of personality seems to have been only to become a mask. Frank opens her book with an epigraph from Eliot's *Four Quartets*, but by its end we are left with a sense of Eliot's hollow men, of the nihilism of power. I doubt that this was the story that Katherine Frank set out to tell. ■

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# CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

## The Bomb's Diameters

**Y**EHUDA AMICHAÏ, THE great Hebrew poet dead a year now, a friend of THE NEW REPUBLIC and its editors, wrote a poem two decades ago that began:

The diameter of the bomb was thirty  
centimeters  
And the diameter of its effective range  
about seven meters,  
With four dead and eleven wounded...

There has been little progress in the dynamics of peace since those stark lines were written. But over time, the Arabs of Palestine have refined the mechanics of random killing. The diameters of each of the four bombs that went off this past weekend in Jerusalem and Haifa were the sizes of the waists of the Muslim suicide bombers who wore them, and their effective range was far larger than the small bomb that prodded Amichai to write 23 years ago. As of this writing, 26 random targets have gone to the bosoms of their ancestors, and not less than 275 will live the rest of their days maimed in body, in mind, or in both. The Jerusalem bombing was a perfect example of the satanic imagination at work: one murderer in the middle of Ben Yehuda Street, another near the bottom, at Jaffa Road where it meets Zion Square. "No exit," as Sartre put it. This is a lively pedestrians-only area, with cafés and shops catering mostly to the under-30s. In calmer times, young Arabs would mix with young Jews there. But among the dead on Saturday night, no one, save the bomber, was Arab and no one was over 19. Some 20 minutes after the first bombing, a car exploded a block away, this blast coolly calibrated to snare some of the fast-converging rescue workers, the religious Jews who collect all kinds of body parts, limbs, flesh, teeth, scalps, and hair of the victims, in fulfillment of Jewish law. And they do so with tragic frequency.

THIS TIME HAMAS, THE ISLAMISTS who only recently Yasir Arafat was trying

to entice into joining a governing coalition for the Palestinian Authority, claimed sole responsibility. Yes, the demented of Hamas (led by that other crazed Osama bin Laden figure, Sheikh Yassin) are responsible for what General Zinni, shocked into a visible pallor, called the "deepest evil. . . . [T]he lowest form of inhumanity that can be imagined." But Islamic Jihad and Arafat's own Al Aqsa Brigade have committed similar crimes. Indeed, the virtue of killing Jews may be the only principle on which the entire Palestinian polity really agrees. This is a culture that is particularly proud of young men who take innocent life. On the afternoon of his macabre deed, hundreds of the Haifa bomber's Nablus neighbors descended on his family's home to help them celebrate his ascent to paradise.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS called on Arafat "to do everything in his power to find those who murdered innocent Israelis and bring them to justice." This is supposed to evoke in our minds the démarche Bush gave to Mullah Omar and the Taliban about turning over bin Laden and the Al Qaeda leadership. But everyone knew that such a transaction would never take place. And no one wanted Omar and his top comrades to survive. Contrast this stringent realism with the delicacy with which the United States has always treated Arafat, and demanded that Israel treat him, too. For decades now, every murderous deed perpetrated by Arafat's men has been followed immediately by American (and, even more so, European) pleas for Israeli restraint, and soon after by pleas for Israeli concessions. So while the administration's rhetoric about our war on terrorism now mirrors its rhetoric about Israel's war on terrorism, the response that we allow ourselves, and that we demand of the Jewish State, remains radically different. For us, appeasement is unthinkable. For Israel, it is prudent.

TO BE SURE, ARAFAT WAS NOT THE first to make terror stalk the Land: Palestinian Jewry lived with terror for five decades before Israeli independence. But Arafat is the world's senior terrorist. To the extent that he personifies the Palestinian revolution, that revolution will always be linked to his political innovations, not just in Israel but wherever there were Jews, people friendly to Israel, or business interests linked to Israel. Just say "Munich Olympics" and any listener immediately thinks: "massacre of Israeli athletes" and "the Palestinians." To Arafat, we also owe the modern phenomenon of airplane hijackings, of which September 11 is the logical strategic and psycho-

logical outgrowth. And the epidemic of car bombs, kidnappings, hostage-takings, and explosions in markets, assembly halls, airports, places of prayer, and theaters, which is now the common currency of people who cultivate the notion of themselves as victims in order to make real victims of others.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY AMERICANS cling to the idea that Arafat wants to cleanse his revolution of terrorists. It would, after all, be a startling act of self-repudiation. Terror is the foundation of Arafat's power, and it is his legacy. This is what his epigones have learned from him, and if some of them now seem to revile him, it is because he has been corrupt on a grand Arab scale that excludes them. Yet neither Arafat's atrocities nor his stealing from the Palestinian poor seem to keep world leaders from fawning over him. The pope prays with him as if he were a penitent. Nearly every European head of state dotes on him. Even after last week's bombings, they tried frantically to rescue him from his self-inflicted predicament. Aside from Ariel Sharon, in fact, the only real world leader who has refused to shake his hand is George W. Bush. In this, the current president offers a refreshing contrast with the last. And his revulsion echoes the revulsion of the American people. In this—Florida or no Florida—Bush speaks for almost everyone.

BUT BUSH, WHO HAS GOTTEN THE symbolism right, has been less impressive when it comes to concrete policy. He only put Hamas on the now quite long list of the world's certified terrorist organizations in November.

ALONG WITH YITZHAK RABIN AND Shimon Peres, Yasir Arafat received the Nobel Prize for the Oslo accords in 1994. I take no pleasure in I-told-you-so's, but I thought Oslo a fraud from the beginning, which means I think that Arafat's Nobel was not just inappropriate, but obscene, a cover for his bloody acts. The prize, which essentially rewarded Arafat for a career of killing innocents, has not restrained him and his minions from killing more of them in the years since. So it is time the Swedish Academy took it back. Although I cannot be sure, I suspect that Rabin would already have done so—recognizing the historic folly for which the prize was awarded. But he is dead and can't. It is, therefore, left to Shimon Peres, who one hopes is not too vain to admit that his Nobel, like the entire Oslo process, was a terrible delusion.

MARTIN PERETZ

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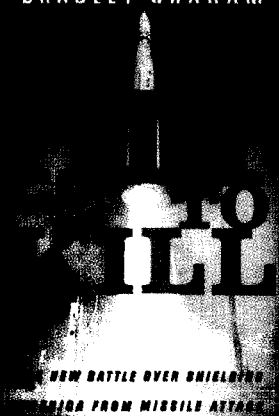
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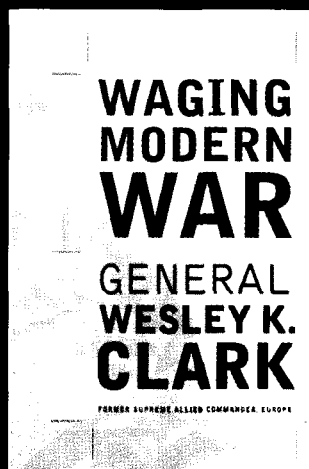
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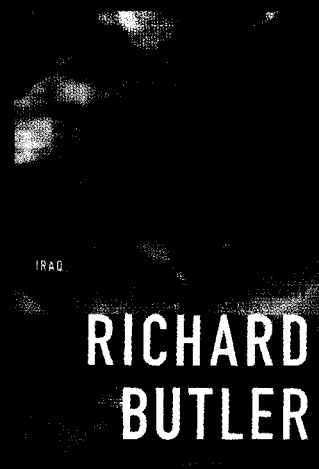
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